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AFTER LIFE BY ELIZABETH M. SEWELL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

L'homme propose, mais Dieu dispose.

AFTER LIFE.

(SEQUEL TO 'THE JOURNAL OF A HOME LIFE.')

BY

ELIZABETH M. SEWELL,

AUTHOR OF "AMY HERBERT," "URSULA," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1868.

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INSTITUTE
MEDICAL
HISTORY

AFTER LIFE

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TO THE MEMORY OF

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(SEQUEL TO "THE JOURNAL OF A HOME LIFE.")

CHAPTER I.

Paris, Hôtel de Londres: October, 2, 18.. Two years since I closed my journal. At least, I have not for that time made more than occasional notes of where we have walked, and who has happened to call. I have been too busy, and there has been really little to write worth remembering.

Changes have come, but they have been gradual, till last spring, when I had a startling anxiety. Cecil had a cough, which at first no one thought much about; but one day there were symptoms of hæmorrhage. The doctor said it was accidental — there was nothing seriously amiss; yet she failed visibly. There was no definite illness, but her lips burned like fire when she kissed me at night, and she lost strength and appetite, and has continued to lose them. I took her, according to the physician's advice, to Tunbridge Wells, and Brighton; but change has done nothing except for the moment. Now, Dr. Spencer has ordered her abroad, and we are on our way to Pau. A winter abroad, it

is said, may be of great service. I try to think so, but my heart fails me. I go back to the past, thinking how or what I could have done differently: but it has all come upon me so suddenly. The dear child was looking and seeming so strong, that I had quite forgotten there were ever any symptoms of delicacy; and even now there is nothing tangible, no pain. There seems no reason why she should not get well, and everyone talks confidently of recovery — everyone, that is, except Dr. Spencer. His cautious words when we parted, made me — oh! so heart-sick. She is bearing the journey fairly well, better indeed than I had expected. The novelty of everything amuses and cheers her, though she was very tired last night. We had a good passage from Folkestone, slept at Boulogne, and came on to Paris yesterday afternoon. Ina and Marietta are with me; and I have a French maid, highly recommended, who has agreed to come with me to Paris on trial, and I am to take her on if it should suit me. My little ones are left at Dernham with Mrs. Bradshaw. It has been a terrible wrench, and at one time I had quite made up my mind to bring Agnes, at least, with me; but when I began to calculate ways and means, I found it would not be right, especially when Mrs. Bradshaw pressed upon me her desire of taking charge of them all; and with her genuine common sense (always the truest kindness) showed me how the matter could be arranged without what she would consider any expense to herself; though I am afraid there must always in these cases be expense in unforeseen ways, which can-

not be provided against. Drayton is left with the children, and Charlie is to spend his holidays at Beechwood. I half dreaded lest Mrs. Penrhyn should make some offer about them which I might find a difficulty in refusing; but she has not even inquired what was to be done with them. As regards Cecil, however, she has been most urgent and suggestive. I could with difficulty escape from seeing her doctor in London, instead of Dr. Spencer, whom Mr. Heathfield recommended, and whose decision I was quite willing to abide by. Happily, Dr. Spencer is in some respects a favourite with Mrs. Penrhyn, and she yielded, after I had put the correspondence into Mr. Heathfield's hands, and she found she could make no impression upon him. Then she took up another anxiety, and sent me letter after letter about our route, and the railways, and the best hotels, taking it for granted that I knew nothing, and that it was her business to see that I made no mistakes. I must do her the justice, however, to say, that she was very thoughtful also for Cecil's personal comforts, and sent her a fur cloak and some air cushions; but even these were accompanied by remarks which implied that I was not likely to think of them. I can scarcely say that I am annoyed at this, for in fact I have become accustomed to it. All our communications for the last two years have been of a similar character. Ina and Cecil have paid two visits at Arling; but Mrs. Penrhyn has studiously avoided any further advances to intimacy with me. She knows that I know her, and she is well content to keep me at a distance. We have had no

explanations. That strange misunderstood, misinterpreted past is left as it was. When Marietta came to live with me, Mrs. Penrhyn wrote to congratulate me on the arrangement, "as it would, she hoped, tend to remove the unpleasant impression caused by my unhappy difference with poor Mr. Randolph;" but when I asked her to explain what she meant, I was told that explanations were quite useless, it was much better to "let bygones be bygones," and so the subject was dropped. What Mrs. Penrhyn thinks, or what she says, or what other people think and say, must still remain a mystery. Only one thing I am quite sure of, that I have never thoroughly recovered my place in the estimation of Lady Anson and Mrs. Harcourt. The old suspicion of my perfect propriety crops up, as it were, every now and then; besides which, they can neither of them forgive me for having kept Marietta in the neighbourhood. They have no cause, however, for uneasiness. Mr. Anson is still abroad; and, indeed, Marietta has received no special attentions from anyone, unless the rector's awkward and silent devotion may be considered such. He pays long visits, and looks at her all the time, and is evidently supremely happy when business gives him an excuse for a private interview; but it does not seem that his thoughts and wishes ever go further. In fact, everything has gone on quietly, and nothing has occurred to make me regret that I offered her a home in her sorrow and loneliness. Independent of the pleasure of her society, her influence over Ina has been one of almost unmixed good. I say almost, be-

cause I think they have been at times so absorbed in each other that, if Cecil were capable of jealousy, she might have suffered from it. Not that Ina is, or ever will be, Marietta's equal, morally or intellectually. She is very quick, but she hates thought, and she dearly loves mystery; and, with all my efforts, I have not succeeded in making her what I call perfectly sincere. Marietta sees and laments it. I think there are times when the consciousness of it chills her; but, with her Italian temperament, she can make wonderful allowance for the faults of those to whom she has given her heart.

Intellectually, I hope Ina has profited by having been made to study a year longer than most girls in the present day. The absurdity of "coming out," as it is called, at seventeen strikes me more and more. People talk about a course of deep reading which is to form the mind, but if the mind is not prepared for the course of reading, of what good will it be? The one year lost is just that which is more important than any that have gone before, because young people are beginning to know the value of what they learn.

As to Cecil, I don't know what I have done with her. She has not come to the deep reading age, and I have not dared to press her with much work. Mrs. Bradshaw begged me one day to give her a receipt for turning out other girls like her, and asked me how I had managed to make her what she is. I could but say, borrowing an idea from Topsy, "I let her grow." Really and truly I am aware of nothing else, unless it

may be that I have loved her, God only knows how dearly. Perhaps also I may add that I have given her confidence, and put upon her small responsibilities. Of positive teaching or direction she has had little or nothing, except in the way of regular study. She has not seemed to require it. The pure transparent mind has apparently been unsullied even by the breath of self-consciousness. It has simply reflected heaven, and so it has become heavenly.

Paris, *October* 4. — This hotel is particularly comfortable; the servants are so thoughtful and attentive; but it is rather expensive, as there is no *table d'hôte*, and they charge six francs for a private dinner. I have been trying to tempt Cecil's appetite; it is so difficult to make her eat as much as she ought. Ina and I went to the Louvre this morning, and Marietta (who has often seen it) stayed with Cecil. One is glad to refresh one's artistic memory from time to time. Not that my memory is artistic at all. I like certain pictures because I like them, and often cannot tell the reason why. The famous Murillo I do not greatly admire. That particular subject, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, never touches me; and in order heartily to enjoy a picture, I must enter into the subject as well as admire the painting. As we were leaving the Louvre, we passed a young man whose face struck both Ina and myself as having a singular resemblance to Bessie Penrhyn's. It crossed my mind afterwards whether he could possibly be John Penrhyn. If so, I am glad we are going away from Paris so soon, for it

would be awkward to make acquaintance with him, and not to show him attentions; and yet I could scarcely avoid this, considering the family to which he belongs. He is a very gentlemanly-looking young fellow: more than that, indeed; there is something poetical and interesting about him, which makes the likeness to Bessie Penrhyn all the more singular; for nothing can be more matter-of-fact than she is. I think there was something in the melancholy look of the eyes which recalled her. Yet his were dark, and hers are grey. But perhaps, after all, he was a perfect stranger. It was extremely hot all day, and I was tired, and glad to rest in the afternoon. When it became cooler, we took Cecil for a drive through the best parts of Paris and the Champs Elysées. She thoroughly enjoyed it at the time, but she came in rather exhausted, and I reproached myself for having taken her too far.

Monday, Octobor 6. — Cecil has not been out since Saturday. I am afraid she has suffered from the long drive. One thing rather troubles me. I am obliged to give up so much of the duty of attending upon her to Marietta. Ina cannot go about without me; neither, indeed, can Marietta. So I was at church twice yesterday, in order that they might both go, and it seems now as if I had not spent any time with Cecil. I watch Ina anxiously in this new phase of life. Travelling brings out character so strongly. There is self at the bottom still, a very sweet, gentle-mannered, refined self; but withal a very determined and persistent one. She knows it; that is my consolation. She is not blind,

as she used to be. She was bent upon going to the Madeleine this afternoon, just to see the church, and she persuaded Marie — our French maid — to ask permission to go there herself; and then Ina came and said she should so like to go with her. I soon found out that it was Ina's own suggestion, and I told her plainly that I wished she would always come to me in a direct way. But I did not refuse her. She is too old now to be treated as a child. One can but put her want of openness in trifles before her, and make her ashamed of it; and she was ashamed, and confessed it, half earnestly, half laughingly, saying to me, that she knew she liked to gain her point in a roundabout way. I looked grave, and then she was sorrowful; and so we made up our little disagreement very affectionately; but, though vastly improved, Ina's impressions are never very deep.

She told me when she came back that she had seen cousin John, as she will call him, as they were crossing the Rue Tronchet, and that she is sure he had the same kind of curiosity about her that she had about him, for they mutually stared at each other. It is just possible there may be a family likeness in Ina which may have attracted notice (supposing it to be John Penrhyn), though I confess I do not see it. Ina is like her father's family, who were much handsomer than the Penrhyns. I was amused at the simple way in which she talked about the little rencontre, not at all, or apparently not at all, with the suspicion that there could have been any attraction for the stranger besides

curiosity. And most probably there was not, for the young man looked far too much of a gentleman to be impertinent; but Ina would by nature be inclined to construe any notice into admiration. It is only, I think, since Marietta has been with her that she has learnt to understand how greatly a woman's safety and happiness depend upon being, as a rule, unnoticed. At any rate, so long as she can come and tell me whom she meets, and what she says and does, I am satisfied. I never criticise, or advise, or comment upon any of these little confidences. She laughs sometimes, and says that no one can think so badly of her as I do, because nobody hears all the naughty things that I do. I tell her, yes, they are very naughty, but I was naughty in the same way myself when I was her age. Sometimes she insists upon hearing some of the naughtinesses, and I give her a little insight into a few of the foolish things I used to do and say, ending with a lecture upon my own misdeeds and my repentance, which I leave her to apply to herself. It is all experimentalising, but I do for the best; and, anyhow, I have gained Ina's confidence. She will tell me anything and everything when it is past. All that I complain of is, that when her will is strong upon any point she does not acknowledge her wishes plainly beforehand. That great shock at the time of Mr. Randolph's death did a great deal for her. But she wants something more to make her thoroughly in earnest.

It has come into my mind to-day whether, after all, I have been wise in leaving Drayton behind. Mrs.

Bradshaw would have been satisfied without her, as she is expecting the Colonel's family; and their nurse would have superintended my little ones with the help of an under-maid, whom I could have provided. But at the time I fancied a French maid would be more helpful. I did not quite foresee how useful Marietta would be able to make herself, from her acquaintance with foreign ways, neither was I as anxious about Cecil as I am now. It is better to own this at once; I shall do myself no good by trying to hide from myself the truth of things. I am anxious — more so to-day than I have been at all. There is such a great languor and depression about the dear child. . . . . Marietta has just been to me. We had a little conversation, and I have arranged to write to Mrs. Bradshaw, and propose that Drayton shall join us here. I shall be sorry to part with Marie, but it is the only thing to be done. Marietta says that having to talk French to her tries Cecil, and that there are little things which Cecil cannot bear anyone to do for her except Drayton. She would not say this to me, fearing it might worry me, but Marietta saw that it was right I should know. So Drayton is to join us. It will detain us a little, but we had always intended to stay at least a week in Paris, for I had hoped that Cecil might enjoy it. But she seems scarcely equal to the fatigue of driving about. I wish I could prevent myself from looking so anxious. Marietta says that Cecil watches my face, and always makes an effort to be bright when I come into the room, because she cannot bear to vex me. I did not know

that I betrayed my feelings so plainly; and, in fact, I have been more hopeful since we left England until to-day, when I have been startled by seeing what a great step in the downward direction has been taken since Saturday. Is it from fatigue? If so, the week's rest may do wonders.

October 11, *Saturday*. — Drayton came yesterday. The relief to my mind is inexpressible. She is so much used to illness, and can judge from symptoms so much better than myself. Cecil was better on Tuesday and Wednesday, and went out a little: if it had been otherwise I think I must have called in a physician, though Dr. Spencer had given full directions which he hoped would last till we reached Pau. On those two days I managed a little sight-seeing for Ina. She wished very much to go to Versailles, but it really was not possible. It is not a place to be hurried over. It seems unkind to leave Marietta so often at home; but then she knows Paris thoroughly, and I think too she has a latent dread of possibly meeting her aunt in this great cosmopolitan city. Nothing has been heard of Mrs. Randolph for six months. Previous to that there were letters from time to time — always mysterious — never saying where she actually was, only where her letters were to be directed. That she is with Lady Chase I have little doubt, and that this is the reason of her secrecy; for I imagine she thinks that were she to own it, Marietta would no longer write to her. And Mrs. Randolph clings to Marietta with a characteristic appreciation of all that is good and pure, and which yet does not ap-

pear to weigh a grain in the balance against her own selfish inclinations. I felt for her deeply at the time of her husband's death. Her letters then were despairing. She was overwhelmed with self-reproach. But as for action as the result of feeling, it never appears to enter her head as a possibility. Marietta suffers from this ignorance of her aunt's movements in a most vexatious way. Mr. Randolph's legacy was in some way dependent upon property on which his wife had a claim; at least, her consent was necessary before it could be sold, according to Mr. Randolph's wish, and the legacy actually handed over to Marietta: and in consequence of this mysterious silence, and the loss of letters, and the perpetual delays and misunderstandings which have been the result, two years have gone by, and Marietta has actually never received a penny of her uncle's legacy, and will have to pay a large sum to her lawyer for trying to settle a matter which it seems cannot be settled, at least till Mrs. Randolph is found.

Things being in this state, I confess I should not be sorry myself to meet Mrs. Randolph, and have the opportunity of explaining to her the inconvenience, to say the least, that she is causing. But Marietta is morbid upon the point. I suspect, too, that, without exactly acknowledging it to herself, she has a superstitious dread lest, in some way, if they were to meet, she should be compelled to leave us, and go to her aunt. I have no feeling of this kind myself. Mrs. Randolph is not a fit guide and guardian for a young girl, and I should not have the slightest scruple in setting my-

self entirely against such a plan. But Marietta is so conscientious, so fearful of being misled by her own inclinations, and so indifferent to what the world may think and say of her, that she would not recognise the cogency of my arguments; and then her spirit of independence — and she has a great deal of independence — would lead her to assert the necessity of what she thinks right, and to act upon it. At any rate, the result of all this is that Marietta is not comfortable in Paris, where she has a suspicion her aunt is, and will be very glad when we leave it, as we hope to do, on Monday, on our way to Pau.

Sunday 12. — It is quite cheering to see how my dear child has rallied since Drayton came. She says it is so pleasant to be able to talk English, and to have all her little wants forestalled. I read part of the service with her and Ina this afternoon, whilst Drayton and Marietta went to church, and she joined in it without being tired; and this evening she has been in the *salon*, talking quite cheerfully, and with apparent strength; but I sent her to bed early, because of our journey to-morrow. As we turned into the Rue St. Honoré this morning, coming from church, I saw "Cousin John" again, at a distance, and he was talking to a lady who certainly reminded me of Mrs. Randolph; though, as I only saw her for an instant, I may have been mistaken. A curious association, if I was correct! I suppose there may be the old family friendship as a link between them; but it cannot be good society for a young man. I am all the more glad that we are

leaving Paris to-morrow; it would be emphatically embarrassing to have both of them on one's hands here. I have had a cheering account of my darlings from Drayton, and a few lines equally satisfactory from Mrs. Bradshaw. Drayton almost thinks me a cruel mother, I can see, because I have taken her away from the little ones; but I feel more and more that it was necessary.

CHAPTER II.

Tuesday 14: *Hôtel de la Poste. Angoulême* — To keep a daily journal when one is travelling is next to impossible. I desire though to note, very thankfully, that we have managed the journey so far very fairly well — not as well as I had hoped when we left England, but still, better than I anticipated in Paris. These French railways are terribly trying for an invalid as regards hours: they give you no choice; and when you are once started, I confess, so far as my experience goes, they give you very little help. If you can keep *en règle*, well and good; but if any necessity, however urgent, makes you desire to diverge, you are instantly in a sea of perplexity.

We started at twelve on Monday from Paris; an hour which suited us tolerably well, as Cecil is never good for much early in the day; but the last half-hour was mere dawdling about at the railway station — taking tickets, having luggage weighed — and the poor child was weary before she set off, because she was obliged to sit so long in a public room, with people constantly coming in and out. A ladies' waiting-room would have been an incalculable blessing. Then at Orleans we were to change trains, and there was no

one to show us which way to go; and we were burdened with '*les petites bagages*,' which are absolutely necessary for an invalid's comfort — cushions, cloaks, luncheon-basket, &c. — and there were no porters to carry them, because it is supposed, of course, that all the luggage is put into the hands of the officials at the beginning of the journey, and taken out at the end, and nothing more is required. And so we wandered about, asking questions of strong men, who always answered *là bas*, or *à droite*, and waved their hands and left us; and really at last I was quite alarmed, for Cecil had a long way to walk, and was so hurried, that I scarcely thought she would have been able to reach the Orleans train. Once there, however, she recovered, and slept nearly the greater part of the way to Tours. This part of France is very tempting. I longed to stop at Blois and Amboise, and to make a diversion from our route to the old royal castles Chambord and Chénonceaux, but it was out of the question. Blois is extremely picturesque, built on a hill; the old castle at one end frowning down upon the Loire, and the cathedral keeping guard at the other extremity. If one had been younger and without care, one might have spent hours in working oneself up to sympathy with historical reminiscences, and acting over again the murder of Henri le Balafré. But present anxieties are always so absorbing; and just as we passed Blois I felt especially depressed, seeing how little Cecil could rouse herself to take any interest in the place. She is very fond of history, and a year ago she would have

been quite excited by merely seeing the outer walls of the castle.

We all liked Tours extremely; it is such a very civilised place, and the Hôtel de l'Univers was very quiet. It was scarcely in the town, but rather in a kind of Boulevard. We were too late to see anything of the town last night, and as we were all tired we went to bed early. Cecil had a wish that Marietta should sleep in the same room with her, which rather disturbs Drayton's mind, and I confess is a disappointment to myself. I would so thankfully take the entire charge of her: but she makes herself so unhappy about disturbing or tiring me, that I am afraid she would not tell me what she wanted if I were with her.

She insisted upon our all going out together the next morning and leaving her with Drayton, and I felt that the hour's perfect quiet would be good for her; so we went down the handsome Grande Rue to the bridge, and thus gained a general idea of the town, with its quays and planted promenades, and then lionised the cathedral. A marriage was going on, and Ina was greatly interested in the ceremonies. It is the first time she has witnessed any special service in a Roman Catholic Church, and I saw she was much struck by it. Her mind is just one of those which would be open to the fascination of a splendid ritual. It is an indolent mind, yet delighting in excitement. She likes nothing better than to sit still whilst her feelings are being played upon. Coming out of the cathedral we met an English lady and gentleman who introduced

themselves to us as a Colonel and Mrs. Strangways, friends of Mr. L'Estrange. They had heard from him that we were to be in this part of the world, and Colonel Strangways had received a special charge to be of use to us if we should come in his way. Seeing our names in the visitors' book, they had intended to call on us, but we had gone out too early. This was their explanation, made very kindly, and accompanied by very hearty offers of assistance. I liked them both extremely. She is bright and amusing, but looks ill. They are on their way to Biarritz, but intend to be at Pau before long. Colonel Strangways was urgent for us to make a few long journeys instead of several short ones. He said that we might easily have been at Bordeaux to-night; but I never like to change plans which have been well considered, and Dr. Spencer was so very strenuous as to the risk of over-fatigue for Cecil, that I cannot venture to diverge from his plan. Indeed, when the idea was suggested, it was too late to make any alteration; so we went on our own way, leaving Tours at two o'clock, and reaching this place about seven. Too late an hour both for starting and arriving; but with these French railways, there is no such thing as choice. This place (Angoulême) is primitive and quaint, more interesting to me for that reason than Tours. But the hotel has not the same comforts. We have had a tolerable supper, cutlets and omelette as usual; but I look at the large half-furnished room with misgivings, and dread to think how Cecil will get through the night. We passed through Poitiers this

afternoon, but too rapidly to take much note of it. In this part of France there is interest at every turn for an English person. But one cannot be too thankful that sunny Touraine is not ours still. Ina and Marietta have lost their hearts to Colonel and Mrs. Strangways, and it is a relief, to me to feel that we shall have friends at Pau.

Wednesday 15: *Bordeaux*, *Hôtel de France.* — We spent this morning in walking about Angoulême; for, of course, there was no hope of leaving it till two o'clock. Cecil did not pass a good night, which I was not surprised at. She got up late, and whilst Drayton was dressing her, I took the others out, and we had really a very pleasant walk round the ramparts, and along a terrace, cut in the side of the hill on which Angoulême is built, the Promenade Beaulieu, as it is aptly called. The view was extensive, yet homelike and busy, with a fresh green summer hue about the meadows, and a sparkling light upon the clear waters of the winding Charente, which gave a pervading sense of verdure, sunshine, and prosperity. I could have sat and looked at it for hours, if — a very large if — I could have cut myself adrift from all present ties, and sailed out upon those wings of imagination which some years ago would have rendered such a scene, on such a morning (it was deliciously warm), an entrancing enjoyment. It was market day, and the town was crowded with Touraine peasants, in most elaborately embroidered white caps. How they get them, — whether they work them themselves, or, if they do not,

where they find the money to purchase them, is a marvel. As we slowly made our way through the crowded *Place*, we had full opportunity for contemplating them. But wonderful as they were, they were not half as astonishing as the turkeys. There was a market for them held just in front of our hotel. This part of the world is, I believe, the nursery for *pâtés aux foies gras*, and the turkeys are made much of in consequence. I tried to forget their destination; but visions of slow fires and invalid birds, and all the other horrors one has learnt to associate with the world-famous *pâtés*, would come before me to disturb my amusement. Cecil, happily, had no such misgivings; and when we returned from our walk, we found her at the window of the *salon* laughing heartily with Drayton at the absurdity of the chattering old women who were rushing about under the trees in the *Place*, and trying to collect and keep in order the great fluttering noisy birds. It did my heart good to hear the laugh; but the rally was short-lived. A bad night tells sadly upon the dear child's strength; and when we left Angoulême it was intensely hot, and so it continued till the sun went down. Cecil slept a good deal; and, indeed, we all slept at intervals, for we had had a fatiguing morning. I am inclined to think that Colonel Strangways was right. It would have been better to take longer journeys and fewer. The constant going to and from the railway stations and settling for the night at strange hotels, with the chance of indifferent food and uncomfortable beds, is really more trying to

invalids than the additional fatigue of a few hours in a railway carriage. Ina is the only one of the party who is satisfied that we should have made the journey as we have. She has entirely enjoyed herself, and keeps up her spirits wonderfully. It is emphatically a smiling country between Tours and Bordeaux, and it has given me an entirely new idea of France. The gentle undulations of the ground, the peaceful winding river (not the Charente, but the Dordogne), banked by willows and poplars, the broad green meadows, with cattle feeding in them, made one think of England. I don't wonder that the old Plantagenets were unwilling to relinquish their grasp of such a land. We did not reach Bordeaux till seven o'clock. I don't like the hotel. Murray says it is the best; but we have had an indifferent supper and bad attendance — very minor evils, if only Cecil can have a good night; but it seems to me as if she had lost a month's strength, even more than that, since we left England. I wish Dr. Spencer had told me more plainly all he thought.

Thursday 16: *Bordeaux.* — We arranged when we left Paris to have a day's rest here, and I am heartily thankful for it. Cecil's symptoms make me very uneasy. My heart misgives me sometimes as to whether it was wise to leave England at all, whether these fatiguing journeys may not have done more harm than the change of climate can do good. But I acted for the best, and under medical advice. God help me if I have been mistaken. I will try to leave it all in His Hands. Marietta says very little. I fancy she thinks

— and, indeed, I believe they all think — that if they can keep me from looking anxious, I am not anxious. How little they know me! And yet we are a bright party — Cecil herself one of the brightest, when she is not over-fatigued. To-day she was quite ill all the morning; in fact, she did not leave her room till twelve; but after that she rallied, and really, I think, enjoyed going for a drive in the afternoon. It is quite August weather. I never dream that it is October till I find the day closing in, and feel how short it has been. We are so far from comfortable here that we did not order a private dinner, but determined to try the *table d'hôte*, so we returned from the drive early in order to be ready for it. Of course Cecil dined alone. The hotel is handsome-looking, and we have good rooms, but the attendance is anything but satisfactory.

Bordeaux is a striking place. Ina flatters herself it is almost Spanish; and certainly there is an un-French look about the houses, and one constantly sees Spanish advertisements and notices put up in the windows and on the walls. I think, though, the chief impression one derives from it is that of sunshiny prosperity — a prosperity totally free from the dirt and smoke and hard work which mark our own commercial towns. The streets are broad, the houses tall and white, the *jalousies* a brilliant green. The Garonne is broad and clear, the meadows and woods on the opposite side are fresh and verdant. No doubt if one lived here and could explore the town and dive into the old parts, one should find many picturesque and dirty me-

morials of the old historical days when the Black Prince held his court here; but in rushing through the town, as we all did this morning, one naturally seeks only the principal streets; and the most important record of anything past, which we discovered — except the cathedral and the beautiful octagonal belfry standing detached from it — was the remarkable name of one of the chief streets, *Esprit des Lois*, making one think of Montesquieu, who (though I can't find it in Murray) must, I imagine, have been a native of Bordeaux. I noticed it especially, because it is so completely the fashion in France to obliterate the past. In Paris, when one asks, "Where is such a place? or when did such a thing happen?" the only answer one receives is, "*Nous avons changé tout cela.*" There was a fair going on in the suburbs, and we spent some time among the different booths, which, however, contained nothing very remarkable or inviting, except from being in some slight degree novel to our English eyes. There were shows also, with giants and harlequins; and, in fact, a fair is a fair all the world over: and but for a few Spanish figures of men and mules, there would have been little to distinguish this from a fair in England. I was standing at a stall buying a pincushion, which I thought would please Agnes, when Ina whispered in my ear, "Cousin John!" and, to my extreme surprise, I saw the same gentleman we had met at the Louvre, crossing the *Place*. He recognised us, and I am quite sure his impulse was to take off his hat and claim acquaintance; and if he had lingered for

a few moments, I believe mine would have been the same — I don't mean to take off my bonnet — but to bow. The very fact of not expecting to see him in this part of the world made me feel cordially towards him. I felt we were all strangers together in this foreign part of a foreign land; but before I could recover a kind of startled shy feeling, he had turned a corner, and was gone. I imagine he is staying at the Hôtel de Londres. It is quite absurd how entirely we have made up our minds that he is John Penrhyn, when very likely he has no connection with him. It is a comfort to feel that if we are to own him as a relation, he looks like a gentleman, which is a good deal to say for an Englishman on the continent. The way young men, and old men too, often disguise themselves when they get free from what they call conventionalities (which, to my mind, mean soap and water, a clean neck-cloth, and well-trimmed beard and moustache), is surprising. "Cousin John," however, is guiltless on the score of neatness.

10 *o'clock* P.M. — I wrote the former part of my journal before the *table d'hôte* dinner, and thought I had finished for the day; but just as I was going to dress for dinner, "Mr. John Penryhn" was announced. Naturally enough we were not surprised, except at the first moment. He had found out our names from the visitors' book, and came to claim relationship. He is quite young, I should think about two or three-and-twenty, travelling, as he says, for health, as well as amusement, having overworked himself at Oxford, and

being obliged in consequence to miss a term. He is staying at the Hôtel de Londres, and is on his way to Biarritz. We all liked him much. The resemblance to Bessie, which caught my attention the first day, lessens greatly on a nearer approach. There is a good deal of intellect in his face, and considerable determination. I doubt his having much poetry in his composition, but he strikes me as being perfectly simple, straightforward, and earnest. I am glad he is going to Biarritz, for I could not have him as an *attaché* to our party, and I should not know how to keep him away. He and Ina made great friends in a cousinly way, but there is nothing more awkward than cousinship; and besides — Henry Penryhn's son! I am thankful he is to be at Biarritz. I did not ask him how long he meant to stay.

The result of our interview was a good deal of worry about our travelling plans. The line is not yet opened to Pau; and as the best route, we had settled to go by railway to Tarbes, sleep there, and drive to Pau — about forty miles, I fancy — the next day. In fact, I had written to Pau to order a carriage and horses to be sent over to Tarbes for us. But John Penrhyn, who is learned in Bradshaw, assures me that we cannot leave Bordeaux till two in the afternoon, and cannot reach Tarbes till eleven at night — a great deal too late for Cecil. And he says, also, that we shall find no good accommodation at Tarbes, and strongly advises us to stop at Aire, a town an hour or more short of Tarbes, and drive over to Pau the next

day from thence. I believe that will be about fifty miles, but anyhow it will be better than keeping the dear child up so late. He was very good-natured about it, and undertook to telegraph the change of route to Pau, and I hope it will be all right; but I feel as if we had been blundering, and ought to have understood our own plans better. Marietta is extremely vexed about it all, because we rather depend upon her, and the explanations which she gives of the continental Bradshaw — more puzzling far, I am convinced, than Euclid. And up to this time she has managed admirably for us. She is half unhappy, half angry, when she has made a blunder, and is inclined to exaggerate my unfortunate vexed looks, and to think that I lay the blame upon her, when, in fact, I lay it all upon myself. These difficulties, and Cecil's being so worn by the journey, make me feel as if a black cloud hung over Bordeaux, in spite of its sunniness.

CHAPTER III.

Pau: October 21, 18 . . — We have been here since last Saturday, the 18th. To-day is Tuesday. The journey to Aire was a trial. John Penrhyn called in the morning, and insisted upon going to the railway station with us, and seeing us off, and I thought all would be satisfactory. But it was a longer journey than I anticipated, and we had once (I forget where) to change trains in the dark, and the rushing about, and asking questions which received no answer, and losing each other, and tiring ourselves with carrying the endless *petites bagages*, added to my extreme anxiety for Cecil, were very far from pleasant. The only interest, while there was daylight, was to be found in the fact that we were passing through the Landes; pine woods and heaths stretching for miles and miles, unvaried in monotony, but impressive from their extent — the ash-coloured sandy soil giving a peculiar but very sombre colour to the scenery. As we drew near Aire I began to have misgivings about our accommodation for the night. We had telegraphed for rooms from Bordeaux, but it was possible that the telegram had not been received; for this part of the world is only in the infancy of railway civilisation. A very kind elderly gentleman, travelling with an invalid

daughter, cheered me by bright expectations; but when we reached the station, and drove through the wretched town, in a shaky omnibus, and stopped at the entrance of the hotel, I was very uneasy. The place looked so poor, so utterly unfit for Cecil; and she, poor darling, was extremely tired, and needing every comfort. I felt sure some mistake had been made, especially when we heard that no telegram had been received. However, it was, as we were told, the only decent hotel in the town, and our friend advised us strongly, if we could find anything like sleeping accommodation, to accept it, for we were certainly likely to fare worse elsewhere. He himself got out first and went in; and when he came back he told us that the rooms were clean, and the people civil; and upon the strength of this assurance we alighted.

As was to be expected, the floors were uncarpeted, and the beds uncurtained (we were probably all the better off for that), but it was a very dreary prospect for an invalid, after a long late journey, it being then nearly ten o'clock. There were but three rooms to be had. Cecil went to bed directly. The rest of us thought first of supper, for we were very hungry. But there really was nothing in the house, except bread and perfectly uneatable butter. We could get no meat, no eggs. Cecil had a fancy for tea, which we unwisely ordered instead of coffee, and found it totally undrinkable. Happily we had some cold chicken and preserves in our luncheon basket, and by that aid we contrived to make a tolerable meal, which was also

rather a merry one; for we had it in Cecil's room, sitting at a table drawn close to the bed; and as she was then resting and comfortable, and able to eat a little herself, we were all cheered, and went to bed afterwards delighting in the thought that the next day was to be the last of our journeyings.

A lovely morning followed, but no carriage had come for us from Pau, and I was in dread lest we should be detained at Aire, and obliged to spend Sunday there. Our friend and his daughter were more fortunate, and went off early. I suppose they had known their own minds better than we had. The hotel was a pleasant little country inn, with a bright garden. We breakfasted late, upon rather better materials than had been forthcoming the night before, and managed to wile away an hour or two; and at last, to my extreme joy, the carriage was announced, and we started for our drive, the people at the inn insisting upon our carrying away a partridge as a present for the invalid young lady. A long long drive that was, not wholly without interest since it was new, but in no way striking till we caught sight of the Pyrenees, jagged in outline, soft in colouring, in parts snow-capped. Mountains are always an indescribable delight to me. Ina clapped her hands in ecstasy. Cecil gazed at the hills, and I saw that her eyes filled with tears, and I sat quite silent, and felt too much for thought. Marietta turned to me and said, "When I last looked at mountains they were the Alps." And the words pained me, for it seemed — perhaps it was

only seeming — that she must be still pining for Italy, and the ties of relationship, which, with all our love, we can never claim.

We drove into Pau through one of those long, straight poplar avenue roads which one meets with everywhere in France, and which entirely destroy all romance. Even the mountains scarcely looked interesting when seen as a background. Then came something more picturesque — the old castle, the birthplace of Henri Quatre, and the moat and woods adjoining; then a rather dirty and uninteresting and bustling part of the town, with no peculiarities of architecture to make it endurable; and then a long, broad street stretching quite into the country, and composed of very motley houses — some large, some small, some standing back in gardens, some opening directly upon the road; altogether very like fifty other streets which one has seen once, and never wishes to see again. This was the Rue Porte Neuve, considered a very good situation; for Pau varies extremely in this respect, and some parts of the town, I fancy, are positively unhealthy.

We were received at the *porte cochère* by our landlady, an Englishwoman, who has lived in France till she speaks her native tongue with a French accent. But she is English in feeling, and taste, and understanding, and has managed to make us extremely comfortable. Our rooms are rather high up, but then they command a most fascinating view, for we look over a garden at once to the mountains. The Pic du Midi,

the Pic de Gers, the Pené d'Aube, the Arriers Grand, all stand before us, with the Brèche de Roland and the Cauterets. To look at them for a few minutes before breakfast, and then sit down together domestically, as on ordinary occasions, is quite sufficient romance. I never before realised so fully what the character of scenery is — its individuality. These Pyrenees are so wholly unlike the Alps, they are so quiet in colouring, so refined, one might almost say feminine in hue and outline. The very strength and sharpness they possess, and which one can quite see, seems toned down. They have power, doubtless, but power which they would be unwilling to use. I have observed as yet no great contrasts of colour, no dark shadows, or bright lights. A lovely purple haze hangs about their base, while the peaks are a soft grey, almost melting into white, even when no snow is upon them. The Pic du Midi stands apart, not as if lording it over inferiors, but with a calm sense of pre-eminence, which yet willingly admits that there may be others in other places surpassing it. Altogether, I have seldom looked upon anything more soothing. Marietta and Ina go into raptures of imagination as they talk of Spain, which being on the southern side of the mountains, they picture to themselves as a land of perpetual sunshine. But I have no wish to go beyond my present home, where we have every comfort, and, what is just now in itself the embodiment of all comforts for me — rest. We have a small but pretty *salon* with three south bedrooms adjoining, and two other large rooms at the back. Cecil,

of course, has the best of the south rooms, and I don't think there is anything more to wish for for her; she really could not be better off. Marietta, too, luxuriates in a southern aspect, and has seemed quite invigorated since she has turned her face to the sunny side of this dark world. I don't know what to say and think of Cecil. Dr. Cole came yesterday, and looks grave, but he will not say much. She has certainly rallied since we came, and has quite enjoyed one or two drives, but I cannot help seeing, though I do not say so to anyone, that every day shows some slight diminution of strength. I question if the doctors, any of them, quite know what is the matter with her. There has been no return of hæmorrhage since we left England, which is a good sign. One thing I remark is, a tendency to irritability, quite unlike herself. I know no one less irritable than Cecil, by nature. It distresses her very much, and she complains to me about it, and says it makes her feel so wicked. But I do not let her be severe with herself. If man can be merciful to such a natural infirmity, I am sure God will be; and to me it is a marked symptom of disease, one amongst many. I have had letters from England. The most important one, which makes me quite happy about the children, is from Mrs. Bradshaw.

"*Beechwood: October* 14. — My dear Friend, — I have been calculating times and seasons, and have made out to my satisfaction that you are just arrived at Pau. My mind travels after you, and brings back word that

a letter from Beechwood would be the most acceptable gift you could receive on first settling in your new home. Don't think I am grown conceited in my old age. I don't suspect you of inordinate love for me, but only of ordinary love for your little pets, who are the very delight of my heart, and as good as gold. This, by-the-bye, is saying very little for them, considering that gold is not of much use till it is coined; and when it is, it is the root of all evil. But it was the first simile which came into my head, and I had not time to think of a better. I have had one fit of passion from Hugh; but I placed him on a high chair, and left him to scream by himself, and he soon grew tired of the sound of his own voice; and when he was tolerably quiet, I put him into bed — a very soothing punishment — and he sobbed himself to sleep, and woke up, as he told me, quite good. Bonnie little Essie is never out of humour; in that way she makes me think of Cecil. But Agnes, my dear friend; what do you intend to do with her? She would rival St. Theresa in scruples and devotion. I see nothing for her but a sisterhood; I don't say a convent, because that would shock your Protestantism; but in my secret heart I am convinced that her nature is the stuff out of which nuns are made, and that she never will be satisfied till she is a nun. She possesses precisely the magnifying power required in order to go into hysterics of grief, because she has eaten three mouthfuls when she ought only to have taken two. A little saint she is unquestionably; but, my dear, if you don't take care she will some day drive herself and

everybody about her wild. Don't think I am hard upon her, or inclined to laugh at her. God forbid. I say it in all earnestness. She is a continual sermon to me; but then she certainly was not made for this rough world, and it is a constant labour, and an interest too, to teach her to suit herself to it. You know my household is not like yours: we are not such patterns of order and propriety; and my son, a most worthy man, and a good Christian too, is still a man and a soldier, and gives his off-hand opinions, and speaks out hastily. Moreover, he delights in teasing, and rejoices in mystifying your poor little woman, and making her think he means something very dreadful, when he really means nothing. And she is so profoundly reverent! She thinks it a grievous sin to imagine that anyone five-and-twenty years older than herself can say what is wrong, let alone a married man and a papa; and what with her conscientiousness, her love of truth, and the colonel's naughtiness, her poor little mind is in a perpetual bewilderment. I laugh — I can't help it — but I am vexed too; and I tell you about it that you may understand, in case the poor child should pour out her griefs. I can't keep my son in order — I never could (there is a confession for you); and men never can understand the suffering they inflict upon these ultra-sensitive morbid little beings. To them it is all play, and they no more believe that the children really suffer, than the fisherman believes the worm suffers when he sees it writhing on the hook. I wish, though, I could think that your dear child did not suffer more acutely

than the worm. She does not writhe, but she blushes; and well I remember myself (it was in the days before the flood, and before I grew hardened and yellow) what pain that was. We had quite a scene yesterday; it was at luncheon. We were talking of some old acquaintances — Indian people — especially of a widow, no longer a widow, but married again, to a man much younger than herself. The colonel censured the marriage, and declared he had a great objection to Indian widows, and thought it a great pity the Suttee was abolished. Agnes raised her little voice just above a whisper, and asked Miss Marchmont (the governess) what the Suttee was. The colonel heard, and answered: "it was a very excellent Indian custom: widows burnt themselves with their husbands' dead bodies on a funeral pile, and so a great many disagreeable people were got rid of." You can imagine how Agnes looked! How those large deep violet eyes opened, and what a mist of horror gathered over them! The colonel repeated and emphasised his assertion, putting on his gravest face, and Agnes did not speak, but only looked; and the naughty colonel went on to declare that he should get up a petition to Parliament for the restoration of the Suttee; and Agnes turned from one to the other, and received no help or comfort from anyone, for we were all at the moment "wickedly bent," and enjoyed her perplexity. At last there came actual tears, and I was obliged to interfere, and explain. But the poor little thing could not recover herself, and rushed away to her own room before luncheon was over, to get out of the way of the colonel's *badin-*

age. I give you this as a specimen. In all other respects we are getting on admirably. Miss Marchmont puts Agnes at the head of her list of good children, and says she has excellent abilities. As for our own little ones, they are enchanted to have companions, and cannot scream loudly or long enough to express their delight. And dear simple Marian looks up at me with her bright vacant eyes, and asks, "how can Mrs. Anstruther manage to make her children so obedient?" By-the-bye, when you find time for thought, tell me what is the attraction which sensible men find in silly women. It is a problem I have been trying to solve ever since my son took to himself a wife.

"No room for village news to-day, as there is no scandal: you know one can always find a corner for that. I dread the sight of Harry Anson's face when he returns and finds Marietta fled. I am convinced he is true to his old love, because Mrs. Harcourt has set on foot a report that Miss Randolph is gone abroad with the intention of joining her aunt. "Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought." I say nothing about Cecil. If she is better, you know well how my heart will rejoice. If not — my dear friend, I shall put your name into my prayers, and hers into my thanksgivings. No one will understand that better than yourself. My hearty greetings to all. I feel sure Marietta is more fond of me now she is away from me. Tell her so, with my best love: yes, best, for she deserves the best.

"Yours ever affectionately,

"C. BRADSHAW."

Mrs. Bradshaw is right: Agnes is not fit for this world. I have long realised that fact. My business is to make her fit, so far as I can. How? — is the difficulty. I suspect the deficiency is intellectual. Certainly one would not willingly make her less conscientious; and, therefore, one cannot be perpetually laughing at her. But it may be possible to educate her reasoning powers, to make her see where one duty ends and another begins, which is really her great puzzle. Also, and very especially, she must learn to understand a joke. I daresay this winter with Mrs. Bradshaw will be very good for her. It will educate her in a way which I could never do myself, and it will make her feel what a man's mind is, and that is what she very much needs. She has always lived with women, and the effect is narrowing. Ina and Cecil learnt something of the world at school; it was one of the advantages they had there, though it was counterbalanced by much that was objectionable. They did not actually see, but they heard of other spheres besides their own. Agnes lives only in Dernham, and, humanly speaking, believes first, if not exclusively, in me. Most charming as she is in her exquisite purity and simplicity, I cannot let her be pre-Raphaelite in character. It might have done very well for the thirteenth century, but this is the nineteenth, and "to do one's duty in that century" to which God has called one, is as important as to do it in "that station of life." If I should be spared to return home, I must set to work to make Agnes think, and that not by always reading the books with which

I entirely agree, but sometimes those from which I, in some points, differ. In the meantime I accept thankfully the training which circumstances, through God's Providence, are giving her. As for the little ones, I am quite satisfied about them. I am sure they could not be better off; but I have intense longings to see them. Charlie writes me word that he is "really trying," which implies a good deal, though there might be two very different interpretations put upon the words. Mr. Pierce very kindly adds a few words to assure me that my boy is getting on well in his studies, and that he hopes he will soon be fit for a public school. Charlie also says that Frank Neville is jollier than ever, and that he hopes I shall meet Mr. Neville abroad. I am sure I hope not, at least if he is to be accompanied by Henry Anson. But abroad is a very wide term. It may mean Siberia or Egypt.

CHAPTER IV.

Pau: October 28. — Marietta, Ina, and I went to day to the old castle, and saw everything that was to be seen — Henri Quatre's tortoiseshell cradle, and the room in which he was born, Jeanne d'Albret's bedroom, and a screen worked by her, a good deal of Gobelin tapestry, a casket which belonged to St. Louis; also many reminders of the existence of Napoleon III., who takes the whole under his protection, only begging in return that he may be considered *one of the family*. The view from the gardens over the river, and the Côteaux, or lower hills, to the Pyrenees, is most lovely, though there is the dirty town for a fore-ground. Pau is not clean, and not interesting in itself, especially on market days; as I felt yesterday when Ina and I made our way to the post-office through the midst of crowds of peasants. I was not prepared for such a large straggling place. But the walks belonging to the castle, and extending along the side of a low hill bordering the Bayonne road, are lovely. Such sunshine we had to-day, such lovely lights amongst the autumnal-tinted trees, with the old castle and the mountains peering behind them! The sun was so powerful that I could not bear to sit down and have it pouring upon me. But Ina and Marietta were more sun-proof, and at last

I left them together whilst I walked up and down in the shade. When I returned I found them, to my surprise, talking to Colonel and Mrs. Strangways, who have just arrived from Biarritz, which they say is rather too exposed in all ways to please them; and besides, they had engaged their house, and were therefore obliged to take possession of it. It is a great drawback to all these foreign watering-places, that one cannot engage an *appartement* except for the season, between five and six months; and so if the place does not suit one, it remains on hand, unless one is fortunate enough to underlet it. I am glad, myself, of anything which brings Colonel and Mrs. Strangways to Pau, for I was beginning to feel dreary and companionless. In the course of conversation, Marietta and Mrs. Strangways found out they had mutual friends, — friends also of Mrs. Randolph's. I do not know that I am quite glad of this; for anything which brings up Mrs. Randolph's name tends to disturb Marietta's mind, and waken that morbid conscientiousness, I cannot call it anything else, which makes her think that she ought to make a greater effort to find out where her aunt is, and go to her.

October 31. — My precious Cecil has become suddenly much weaker; no one can tell why. Dr. Cole is greatly alarmed. He thought he should startle me, but I have felt the truth ever since we left England. It is a question of time only. Yet, till the day before yesterday, she was driving out, and sometimes seemed to enjoy it. One day she wanted to go to a shop, and

was really interested in choosing some moss-rose buds for her hat. It went to my heart to watch her as they were brought out to her, and she looked them over. She was not strong enough to go into the shop. I don't think she knows at all how ill she is now, and I must tell her. That is my trial. She is very reserved about her illness; yet she has long had doubts about ever getting well. I am quite happy about her. No one can have watched her for the last two years without seeing where her heart is fixed. Faults she has naturally, so we all have; but looking back upon that time, I could not name any one to which she has in the least given way. It has been a quiet, calm, silent walking with God, as a child; quite simple, quite bright and untroubled, though watchful and earnest. Hers is not a mind to disturb itself by questions and scruples. She has grown so lovely! The fresh ruddiness of health indeed is gone, but the colour is bright still; the outline of the face is softened, the expression deepened. When I see her resting against Ina and caressing her, as she sometimes will when she feels better, the two faces seem to me like the faces of angels. For Ina is so touched, so thoughtful now. She does not yet realise what is before her, but the shadow is upon her.

I heard the doctor's opinion in a way which was painful. I had not been very well, and when he came, rather earlier than usual, Marietta and Drayton saw him, for I was not up. I was not aware that there was so great a change. I had noticed the day before that Cecil was weaker, but Drayton, in speaking of

her then, only said it was one of her bad days, and neither of us suspected anything worse than a temporary falling back.

In the afternoon Marietta proposed to go for a walk with me, and we went by some lanes towards Bilhères, a kind of country-house close to Pau. The weather was delicious. We have had torrents of rain at intervals lately, and it has been very cold; but to-day the brightness and warmth were perfectly exquisite. We were walking through English-looking lanes, bordered by hedgerows and trees, and leading us through green meadows, and by cottages, and occasional villas, and the pleasant sense of home and rest came over me; and when I turned towards the south the long range of the purple mountains brought a thrill of romance and wonder which carried me back to the exciting days of youth; and suddenly, when the quietness was stealing over me, making its way into my heart, Marietta turned to me and said: "I must tell you; I have been afraid to do so. Dr. Cole thinks Cecil alarmingly weaker." I think I answered quietly. I could not have said what I felt. No one can describe what it is which makes the sun's brightness mockery, and converts the perception of beauty into an aching pain. And I think, too, I was hurt. It was no one's fault, but I felt as if I ought not to have learnt the truth from anyone but Dr. Cole himself. Marietta was — what she always is — most sympathising and helpful, as far as that was possible. But I can speak to no one of what I feel for Cecil. She is not my own child: that is what

every one thrusts before me. There is an unconscious coldness in their tone. Marietta understands me best; but even she cannot tell what that special place in my heart is which this child occupies, and which no one else can fill. Not that I wish her to live; no, I do not; I can say that in all truth. I give her to God willingly, thankfully. I give her also to her dear father and mother, without a wish to keep her back. They have long waited for her, and theirs is the first claim. But the child is mine in a sense in which she can belong to no other person. I have laboured for her, thought for her, prayed for her (alas, not prayed as I might and ought!) I have, as it were, made her mine by the care and the love — the deep, deep love, never to be expressed, which I have lavished upon her, without a hope of its being perceived, and scarcely of its being returned. For love descends, it does not ascend. The old love the young, as the young can never love the old. And though my darling has given me many fond words and loving caresses, and has joyed to be with me, and felt happier in my approbation than she has ever been with others' praise; yet she has never understood, she never could understand, how my heart has thrilled as I have watched her growing reverence for holy things, her strict conscientiousness, her little daily acts of self-control and thoughtfulness; and how my love has poured itself out in intensity of earnestness as I have given her my calm, customary evening blessing. All these things are known only to God. To the world, my Cecil is only my step-child; and people will satisfy

themselves by saying to each other, even if they never say it to me, how much more terrible it would have been for me if I had lost Agnes. But it is all for the best. There is One who knows: One who can feel and understand. I will speak to Him.

October 29. — Cecil was so very tired last night that I could not say anything to her. To-day I felt that I must do so; and she was better able to bear it. She came into the *salon* as usual. She has never given that up; and she really sits up tolerably late; and until the last few days, she has seemed to enjoy being in the next room to us when we were at dinner in the little ante-room. This evening Marietta and Ina left me alone with her, and then I led the conversation round by degrees, and broke to her Dr. Cole's opinion. I was obliged to do it very gently. I could not say to her then, as he said to me this morning, that the end might come very rapidly; but I suggested that it might be a comfort to her to see a clergyman, and to receive the Holy Communion; and she agreed, and did not shrink from the idea of a private service, which is generally so painful to young people; and then I went on further, and spoke of her present actual state, and her increasing weakness; and at last she seemed to wake up to the perception of its real danger. But even now I question whether she realises it as immediate. Perhaps it is better she should not. Even in cases where one has to rouse a slumbering conscience, which, thank God, is not the case with her, there must always be a doubt of the reality of the feeling which has its

source in the fear of death. My dear child's deep sense of sinfulness, and loving trust in her Redeemer, are too sincere to be affected by the question of months and days. She has lived with God, and she is ready to go to Him. Until lately she has been able to read a little at night herself, and has had her own time for prayers; but to-night we settled that I should read to her after she was in bed. It is a marked step on the descending road; but it is a great comfort to me to have this regular season for being with her alone.

October 30. — I have been trying to find an English clergyman to visit Cecil. It was not easy, for there have been changes and divisions in the ecclesiastical arrangements here, and the English Church in Pau is in a state of transition. I went to the Strangways for advice, and found them most kind. They know a good many people, and I know no one but themselves, and one or two persons to whom they have introduced me. They told me where the chaplain lived; it was at the other end of the town, quite a long walk. I went there with Ina, but he was not at home, so I have been obliged to write to him. I went back to the Strangways afterwards, and they asked Ina to stay and dine with them. They have taken a great fancy to her. I was only too glad to say "yes;" for I dread the effect of all this watching and anxiety. Ina sees now quite plainly how the case stands; indeed, she asked me yesterday what Dr. Cole thought, and then, of course, I told her. She feels it all bitterly, and would willingly spend every moment with Cecil, but I will not allow

it. It would be bad for her in every way. I think she understands even better than Marietta what my love for Cecil is, and this draws us much together. But a young mind cannot bear up against the pressure of a constant heavy grief as an older one can. Ina's health would very quickly suffer without something to cheer her. She brought back a piece of news which just a little disturbs me. A report has reached Mrs. Strangways through a friend that Mrs. Randolph is in Spain, at Madrid, and very ill and lonely. The intelligence does not appear to have a very good foundation, and at first I was inclined to beg Ina to say nothing about it to Marietta till it could be inquired into, and denied or corroborated; but, upon second thoughts, I felt it best to keep nothing back. Mysteries and reserves, unless absolutely necessary, almost invariably work for evil; and what I have always to remind myself of is that Marietta is her own mistress. She must judge and decide for herself as to what she is called upon to do. And if she were to find out that I had in any way hidden things from her, all her confidence in me would be gone; and without confidence where would be our love? But if she were to go from us? If we were to lose both her and Cecil? To go back to Dernham without either! What would Ina do? What should I do? How faithless one is!

CHAPTER V.

November 1. — *Festival of All Saints* — a day on which we always have service at Dernham. It seemed strange and lonely to be without it here, and I did what some people might have misunderstood, only there was no one here to know me. As I came back from the Strangways, I went into one of the open churches, and knelt down amongst the few peasants who were worshipping there, and had a soothing half hour by myself. I needed it, for I had been greatly distressed. There is a slight, very slight, and only occasional wandering in my darling's mind. She has fancies about the things and people near her. This morning she begged to have a parcel sent to Mrs. Strangways, and imagined it was lying on the bed. And the fear of distressing and paining me is exaggerated at times almost to irritability. The disease is apparently in some way affecting the brain. I must try to bear it: but words can never tell how lonely and sad it makes me to feel that others may venture to go near her at all times, and that I have to be careful and watch for opportunities. Drayton and Marietta are invaluable; but I would give worlds to be able to do all that they do. And I had another trouble to-day about Marietta. I told her what Mrs. Strangways had heard; and I saw it

made a great impression upon her. She would not leave me now, I know; but she spoke of the possibility of going to Spain, by-and-by. We both of us knew too well what by-and-by meant. All that can be done at present is to try and obtain some more definite intelligence. One thing I am quite determined upon — that if Mrs. Randolph is with Lady Chase, Marietta shall not go to her alone.

November 12. — Still waiting and watching. Ina feels it terribly. I took her with me this afternoon for a drive to the Côteau de Jurançon, and very lovely it was; a wooded hill of moderate height, studded with villas; and from the terrace, in front of the Château de Perpignan, a most splendid view of the Pyrenees, with a foreground of wood and valley. This is the first really pleasant day we have had for the last fortnight. Generally speaking, it has been rainy and very cold, with frequent fogs, quite home-like! People say there has not been such a bad autumn at Pau for the last thirteen years. I hope, for the credit of the climate, they are correct. Happily, we are very comfortable in our rooms. Our English land-lady boards us, and we can get everything we want for Cecil at a moment's notice, which would be impossible if we were in regular lodgings. Ina tells me that Marietta has been worrying herself about her aunt ever since she knew that I thought I saw her in Paris, and that she wishes very much she had asked John Penrhyn whether he really was with her; but the fuss about the journey put it out of her head at the time, and since then she has

been reproaching herself. I wish Marietta would say out to me everything which is in her mind, as she does to Ina. She thinks it saves me pain to keep things back; but it is just the reverse. This Spanish notion must have taken a stronger hold of her than I had imagined. Ina tells me that when they went yesterday to the Strangways, Marietta took her to Lafon's, in the Rue Henri Quatre, and bought a Spanish grammar and vocabulary.

English letters satisfactory.

November 18. — The darling child is sinking fast. It is inexpressibly grievous to me to be obliged to leave the task of nursing to others, though they do it far better than I should; but I have my few quiet moments at night, which no one can interfere with; and so also I always read with her a very little in the morning. She does not say much; but she rests calmly in the sense of her Saviour's love. At first she had a wish to live; but that feeling is gone now. There is still the slight wandering of the mind occasionally; but she soon seems to recover from it. It is strange to me to watch her singularly increasing beauty. The flush of fever on her cheeks prevents her from having the ghastly look of disease; and she has become so etherealised — it is the only expression I can use — I can scarcely now recall her as the ruddy, strong English girl, whom one would only have noticed as being so pleasant and good-humoured-looking. We have been very anxious for her photograph to be taken ever since we came, but she has never been well

enough for it, and now we are obliged to content ourselves with a copy of one taken before she left England, which one of the good photographers here is to colour. We allowed him to see her this morning at his own request, that he might judge of the colour of her hair and eyes. He quite started when he came into the room and saw her lying in bed with a beautiful colour on her cheeks, and her face brightened by a momentary surprise and amusement. "*Ah, la belle Anglaise!*" he exclaimed. He could scarcely be made to believe how very seriously ill she is.

Mr. Benson, the clergyman, is very kind, and the dear child likes him, and talks a little to him, which is a great comfort. Two days ago we had the blessing of the Holy Communion, and Cecil kept up wonderfully, but she has gone down many degrees since.

November 21. — I thought last night that it would be all over — our darling was so very, very ill; and yet she did not keep her bed. She came into the *salon*, indeed, and sat up for nearly an hour; but after that there was a great change, and we were dreadfully alarmed. She knew something of her own state, and begged that Mr. Benson might be sent for to-day, that she might once more receive the Holy Communion; and I wrote the note that it might go to him the first thing in the morning; but at the moment I scarcely thought that she would live to see the morning.

She did rally again, however, astonishingly. Dr.

Cole marvelled when he came and saw her, for he left her last night with great misgivings. Mr. Benson was with us about twelve, and she bore the service well. In the afternoon she even begged to be taken out of bed and laid upon the sofa. When I came into the room at five o'clock, I found her tossing about and moaning. Almost her first words to me were, "Is it wrong to moan?" And, again, when, in a sudden fit of uneasiness, she had said, "I must" have something done, she asked directly, "Is it wrong to say, I must?" Poor darling! she is so entirely the little child in her simple obedience and humility. She was more comfortable afterwards, and for the first time for many weeks the cloud of reserve passed away, and a whole torrent of pent-up feeling and love came out in a few words. Her heart clings greatly to Dernham. It has been her one knowledge of home; and but that so many whom she loves are with her, it would be hard to die in a foreign land. But she thinks of the little ones; and such an untold regret and tenderness there was in her tone as, after talking with her of home, and receiving her few messages, she exclaimed suddenly, "And Agnes, mamma, Agnes, I can't say it all, but you know it;" and, looking up, she clasped her hands, as if it was impossible for words to tell the feeling she longed to express. Ina has been a great deal with her. The sister's love is very precious. Ina is just beginning to understand what she is losing; but Cecil's earnest words will be more valuable, I fully believe, than even her living example. I

made Marietta and Drayton lie down this afternoon; they both needed it very much: though there has been no actual night watching hitherto, yet their rest has been continually disturbed. Now they are with her, and I am going to bed, for she is comparatively quiet and at ease, and we all think she may still linger on for a day or two.

November 22. — God has taken our darling to her rest. I was called up by Drayton about half-past two o'clock, and told that there was a great change not to be mistaken. She was perfectly conscious to the last — almost more than conscious — for there was something in her tone and words which told of a spirit that was raised quite above earth. She mentioned the servants at home, and begged Drayton to tell them that, with her dying breath, she had prayed for them all; and then she prayed for those she loved; for me, with a special recognition of all I had been to her, and a petition that God would soon take me to Himself, for she knew I should be happier; and for Ina, and Marietta, and the little ones, and for her grandmother and aunts, in language marvellously beyond her natural powers; yet so simply, so fervently, with such wonderful reality! it was speaking to her Saviour, knowing, not merely *believing*, that He was near. She begged us not to grieve for her, and, looking up, said, "kiss me;" and so we all kissed her, and then she sent a message to Mr. Benson. "Tell Mr. Benson how I thank him; that I have thought of him now, and that he has helped me very much." I believed

at that moment that the end was very near; but it was not, and there was terrible suffering before it came, suffering which tried her to the very utmost. Once she began the verse in the "Christian Year" for the Wednesday before Easter: —

> O Lord my God, do Thou Thy holy will —
> I will lie still,
> I will not stir, lest I forsake Thine arm,
> And break the charm
> Which lulls me, clinging to my Father's breast,
> In perfect rest.

She could not quite remember it, and I helped her; and the earnestness with which the words, "in perfect rest," were uttered, I shall never, never forget; there was such an intense longing for it: and yet she made such efforts to be patient, praying that God would make her patient, and saying, "Thy will be done."

She asked us when we thought it would be over, and was told that probably she would live till the dawn; and then she made us watch the clock on the mantel-piece, counting the weary hours as they went by. Once her mind wandered back to Dernham. She thought herself there; and she must have remembered the sunrise from the front bedroom, for she said, "There must be a line of light over the sea. Do you see it?" I did not quite understand her, and thinking she was only speaking as if absent from Dernham, I answered, "Yes; so there will be." "Ah!" she said, "then He is coming." But she waited for Him still many long minutes; and, at length, she murmured,

like a little child, "My eyes are heavy: may I close them?" and those were her last words. When the dawn did appear, she went home. As I passed through the corridor to go to my own room when all was over, I saw the light breaking over the sky.

CHAPTER VI.

November 23. — To-day has been full of most painful business and letters. The funeral is to be on Monday. This is in accordance with the regulations of the country, but it unsettles and distresses one. I have seen Colonel and Mrs. Strangways; I went there in the dusk last night. They have had further news of Mrs. Randolph, and felt that I ought to be told at once, and it was better for me to go to them, as I could talk more freely. Drayton and Marietta are nearly worn out; Ina tries to keep up, but it is a terrible wrench. I can't write about Mrs. Randolph — I can't write about anything. It seems all a dream. But I would not have my darling back, God knows; and in the midst of my heartache I can see the truth of what she herself said in a little note to Agnes, "all is very well with me."

Wednesday, November 26. — Business crowds upon me. It is as well it should. The rapidity with which the past has become past is something unspeakably trying. Sunday was left us for thought — even that would not have been allowed us if the day had not been Sunday. Monday was — I cannot attempt to say what. But I had one comfort, I settled everything myself, and arranged with my own hands the flowers

laid on my darling's coffin. I could not bear to have help, and Marietta and Ina were quite ill. My child seemed, in a measure, restored to me when she was dressed for her grave. I stood by her and looked at her, so calm and lovely as she was; and felt that there could be no fretting disease, no momentary irritability to disturb us. She was, and she is, mine now, as she has never been before, because I feel, if she thinks of me at all, it must be with a full and perfect comprehension of my love. The rest this consciousness gives is indescribable. What the pain of the last few weeks has been I feel now by contrast.

We walked to the cemetery. My darling rests in a far corner, under the shelter of a wall, which will soon be covered with ivy and creepers. I am content that she should be there, though my fond longing was to carry her back to Dernham.

Colonel and Mrs. Strangways were with us. They have been most kind and sympathising in every way. I went to them again quite late on Monday evening. We agreed that nothing should be said to Marietta about her aunt till Tuesday. The intelligence is perplexing. It seems, from what Mrs. Strangways has heard from a cousin at Biarritz, that Mrs. Randolph was there a short time ago with some friends, very respectable people, of the name of Davidson. Now they have quarrelled; and report says that Mrs. Randolph is in Spain — alone, and extremely ill: but where she is, this cousin seems unable to state exactly. Madrid appears to have been only suggested as a possibility. I

do not see the claim that Mrs. Randolph has upon Marietta in the light in which Marietta sees it herself; but I do not feel justified in combating her strong desire to see her aunt. With her very peculiar independent mind, I am convinced she would ultimately follow her own idea of duty, whatever I might say; and the only question therefore is whether I shall help her or leave her to herself. Even if I did not love her as dearly as I do, the events of the last few weeks have so strengthened the tie which binds her to me, that it is quite impossible for me to throw her upon her own resources. She has been my child quite as much as Ina, and as such I must think and act for her as her mother.

I said thus much to Mrs. Strangways, and the question then naturally arose, What did I intend to do? If necessary, go to Spain. I have seen that conclusion looming before me for some time. But first I propose writing to Biarritz, and obtaining some more definite information from the Davidsons. We must stay in Pau another week; there are so many things to be arranged. During that time we may hear definitely where Mrs. Randolph is. When I stated my intentions to Mrs. Strangways, she most thoughtfully and kindly proposed what, in the event of the Spanish journey, would obviate one of its greatest difficulties, to keep Ina with her till I return. Drayton, she says, can go home under the escort of a friend of hers who is on the point of returning to England. I was, I cannot say how, thankful for the proposition. I have dreaded

all along the necessity of discussing plans with Marietta, and allowing her to see the inconveniences to which I should be put if I went with her. She would then have insisted upon going alone, or doing something equally wild. The passionate, excitable Italian feeling shows itself occasionally in a way which is incomprehensible to our colder northern temperament: and Marietta's one weakness would be heroic self-sacrifice.

She was so tired and ill, poor child! on Monday evening, that, even if I had wished it, I could not have introduced the subject. On Tuesday I insisted upon taking her for a drive. Ina could not make up her mind to go, and I sent her over to Mrs. Strangways instead. Marietta and I drove to the Côteau de Gelos. A more perfect home view I never looked upon. If it had been clear, we should have seen the Pic du Midi, and the Pic de Gers, at the end of the valley leading to Eaux-Bonnes, but the distant mountains were all covered with clouds. The hills which were visible were snowy: white mists with a tint of pale rose floated at their base. Still nearer the atmosphere was purple and autumnal. In the foreground were steep declivities, clothed with golden woods, varied by some lingering remains of summer green; the whitened, moss-grown, lichen-covered trunks rising up boldly from amongst them. Little white cottages nestled in the ravines, and were dotted about on the sides of the hills; and home-like villas, standing in gardens, gave an English air to the very exquisite landscape,

only lost when one looked at the snow, and thought of the grim peaks hidden from sight.

Marietta was soothed and cheered by the beauty. She said but little; for we have lived long enough together to enjoy the intimacy of silence. When we did speak, it was to allude to our darling, though we could neither of us bring ourselves to name her. Yet I have talked, and do talk, of her to Mrs. Strangways; it is my great comfort; but Marietta is too near; we feel too much alike. At length, as we were leaving the ridge of the hill to return home, I felt I must bring out the subject which was so pressing, and I said, without preparation: —

"Marietta, Mrs. Strangways tells me your aunt was at Biarritz, before she went to Spain. But it is not at all certain she is at Madrid. I wish we could hear something more definite."

She turned to me with ill-concealed excitement, and said, "I am going to her; but I could not bear to tell you."

I did not ask her whether she had heard more than I told her; I will never let her suppose that I wish to pry into anything which she may wish to keep to herself; but I answered gently, "And I am going with you."

An exclamation, and an absolute rejection of the proposal, followed, then a long conversation, in which I came off, as I fully resolved I would, the conqueror. She was vehement at first, almost angry; there was a mixture of independence and unselfishness, I suspect,

in her feelings; and I could almost have smiled, as I saw the tears in her eyes, whilst she protested she was born to give trouble and pain to every one with whom she was connected; that she had been a constant anxiety to her uncle, and now she was a burden to me; it was so very unreasonable; but I knew that the feeling would pass off, and that the English elements of her character, common sense and good judgment, would at last make themselves heard. So I waited very patiently, only every now and then putting in a word in the form of a question — which is always the most convincing mode of argument, since it throws the *onus probandi* upon your opponent; and by degrees I brought her round to see that the idea of setting off to Spain by herself was absolutely impracticable, and that by accompanying her, which I could easily do if Ina were left with Mrs. Strangways, I might possibly do myself good, and certainly should shield her from harm. She was as enthusiastically grateful then, as she had been wilful before. She seized my hand and covered it with kisses — an Italian fashion which she has never lost, and which I do not desire she should — and we entered into all the plans for the journey with the coolness of two experienced couriers. I feel as I talk to her how young she is, and how surface-deep are the griefs which she has hitherto experienced, though they have been very real. She likes the thought of Spain, and says she does. I do not feel that I can like the thought of anything, except it may be to sit alone in my own room, and go through, again and again, the

scenes of the last six weeks. I ponder by myself what the results of the Spanish journey will be. Will Marietta remain with her aunt? I marvel that she herself does not shrink from such a possibility. But this again is the effect of youth and the Southern temperament. Marietta takes each day as it comes, and does not look beyond it. We sombre northerners might learn a very wise lesson from that habit of mind. I have written myself to Mrs. Davidson, begging her to give me all the definite information she can. Marietta wished to write; but I feel it necessary at once to assume the position of authority; for the poor child, with her independence and eagerness, will surely bring herself into difficulties, if I allow her to have the reins in her own hands. I would give a great deal to be saved this Spanish journey and allowed to go home; but I see no alternative, and I am collecting all the information I can about it. The railway is only partially opened to Madrid; but Bradshaw makes it all look very easy. The language will be a difficulty; but I can just read Spanish, and Mrs. Strangways says she will give me a few lessons in pronunciation. I suppose French will really help us sufficiently; but Marietta's Italian will, I fear, be rather the reverse of an assistance. The two languages are so alike in appearance, and so different in reality, that they are continually running into each other and causing confusion.

The possibility of separation for a few weeks has been suggested to Ina, and has been a blow to her, greater than I anticipated. She likes Mrs. Strangways

so much that I had hoped she would be quite reconciled to the thought of remaining with her; but she is so entirely broken down by this grief, that she cannot interest herself in anything. She says that she would have liked to stay a little longer at Pau, if we could all have been together, for that she cannot bear to leave the cemetery, and she wants to wait and see the cross put up: but people here are so very slow in their work that I do not know when that will be.

Mrs. Strangways wants us to go up to Eaux-Chaudes and Eaux-Bonnes for a night, if the weather should improve; she thinks it may please Ina, and give her new associations with the place. Perhaps it may be so, but I doubt; at any rate, there is no harm in trying, and it is the only opportunity she is likely to have now of seeing the mountains nearer, for as soon as I come back from Spain we must go home directly.

November 29. — A letter from Mrs. Davidson, begging me, if possible, to go to her at Biarritz. She says there are things which she could tell me in conversation, but which cannot so well be trusted to writing. Mrs. Randolph is in Spain somewhere; that is all she knows; but she will find out for certain in a few days. If we do go to Spain, she says we must start from Bayonne, only five miles from Biarritz, which is not, therefore, out of our way. This plan seems a delay, but I do not see how we are to avoid it.

I thought at first of finally leaving Pau on Tuesday, but we cannot possibly manage it; and besides we could not then go to Eaux-Bonnes with Ina. She

seems rather to take to the idea of the little expedition now, and I am only too thankful to find anything which will rouse her. During this last week she has done little else but gaze into the fire with her eyes full of tears. I trust I am not wrong in leaving her, but perhaps the presence of strangers will be better for her than mine. She knows too well what I am thinking of. Marietta is very good and patient, and yet in her heart, as I often fancy, a little impatient. She stands at the window, and looks at the Pic du Midi, and says, with a sigh, "*Ah, povera zia!* — she is beyond the mountains:" and I am sure that she feels as though she ought to be a bird to fly over them; but she acquiesces in all our arrangements, and is most tender to Ina, never for a moment allowing her to think that she has any thought in her heart, but that of comforting her. I don't think Ina recognises the possibility of Marietta's remaining behind in Spain. I try not to do so myself. It could not — must not be. I have arranged for Drayton to go home, and there is a prospect of sub-letting our rooms. These are great reliefs. My home letters give me all the comfort which love and sympathy can; but no one knows yet that the end has come, and the hopes which they still all express make one's heart very sad.

I went to the cemetery by myself on Sunday, between the morning and afternoon services, and then I could get the feeling of the place more into my mind. It is not as dreary as I had feared. The ground itself is part of the Roman Catholic cemetery, and this new

piece has lately been taken in, so that it looks rather untidy now, but it will soon be put in order. The dear child rests close under a south wall. The sun was shining full upon it when I was there on Sunday, and the warmth of the day was like summer. A glimpse of some of the near wooded hills around Pau is to be had from the spot, but the far-off mountains can only be seen outside the cemetery. There is one view looking down a steep street to the trees around the Château, with the white peaks rising beyond, which I am almost tempted to have photographed. It gives the only true idea of my child's last resting-place on earth; and just now when the different ranges are marked by lines of glittering snow, it is indescribably beautiful. I have given orders for a flat stone (which is the custom of the country), with her name and the date, and a cross engraved below. I mean also to have an upright cross at the head, with the words, "Thy will be done." They were her own words that last night, and they express all one longs to feel, and all I hope that one does feel. The next grave to hers is that of a clergyman, who died three or four weeks ago. Mr. Benson spoke to me about him, and said how good he was. I don't know why I should feel comforted by the thought that I know something of the person who rests beside her; but I do.

CHAPTER VII.

Hôtel Baudot, Eaux-Chaudes: December 1.— A most delicious day, warm and bright: such a delightful contrast to the weather we have lately had! We left Pau between ten and eleven. Ina really looked cheered, and this cheered us all. We had a most lovely drive, with the snowy mountains, headed by the Pic du Midi, just in front; and a little river, clear and foaming, rushing by our side, spanned occasionally by rude bridges. Picturesque peasants stood at the doorways of their neat cottages, or carried on their work in the green meadows which sparkled in the sunshine, and blended their fresh hopeful colouring with the autumnal orange tints of the woods, and the grey and purple haze on the mountains. We waited for an hour and a half at Louvie to rest the tired horses, and walked on some way, allowing the carriage to overtake us. Ina, for the first time, talked with some interest about the Spanish journey, and wished she was going with us. Marietta said that she would not have insisted upon going if she had not thought it her duty. It was the feeling for her uncle which chiefly prompted her. She hoped I understood this. Yes, I did understand it; but I scarcely said so heartily enough to satisfy her; and I was obliged to assure her again and again that

I was not merely yielding to her whim in accompanying her, but doing what I felt was best for us both. And certainly I am not yielding to a whim, for, with her strong feeling of duty, there is nothing else to be done, and it would make me really miserable if she were to go alone; but how I sometimes dread the journey, no words can say. The latter part of our drive was so steep, and the horses were so far from being up to their work, that it was late and quite dark when we reached Eaux-Chaudes, and we could only obtain a glimpse of some magnificent cliffs shutting in a deep ravine, down which rushed a noisy mountain torrent. We drove to the Hôtel de France, but it was shut up. At this season the place is quite deserted, and I was afraid we should, after all, find no accommodation; but we were received at the Hôtel Baudot, and found the people civil, and the rooms as comfortable as rooms furnished for summer could be. A blazing fire and a good tea made us feel quite at home; but we were all tired, and went to our rooms early. I am writing my journal just before I go to bed. The wind is rushing and howling round the house, and knocking for entrance at the windows. I doubt if it promises favourably for to-morrow, and I think of Spain and the Sierra Guadarrama, and the table-land of Madrid, and shudder. The chambermaid tells me that we are not the only people in the house. A German baron has been here for some days.

December 2: Pau.—To my surprise and satisfaction, we have had a fine day, and certainly we have made

the most of it; but I thought at first we were to have had a disappointment, for when we asked for a carriage to take us up the valley to Gabas, at the foot of the Pic du Midi, we found that there was not such a thing to be had, and we were actually obliged to send for one to Eaux-Bonnes. This delayed us a good deal. As we were waiting about, Marietta came to me with rather a disagreeable piece of information. She had caught a glimpse of the German baron, and recognised in him Baron von Bronnen, Lady Chase's half-brother, who stayed at Woodleigh, and brought Mrs. Randolph into such difficulties. She asked me what she should do if they met. Of course, I said, "cut him;" but I was quite sure he would take care not to meet her if he had the least idea who she was. We sent for the visitors' book, but he had not written his name. Marietta, however, says she has not the slightest doubt that it is he. It did not strike her that there was anything peculiar in his being in this part of the world just when Mrs. Randolph has been in the neighbourhood, and I did not suggest the idea. I wonder where his wife is. Marietta asked me if it would be wrong to say anything about him to Ina, and I said "no." Ina is no longer a child, and mysteries only create mysteries. In dealing with a disposition like hers, a little prone to something not absolutely, transparently open, it is essentially important to have no more reserves than are necessary. And I have always found in life, even in the case of children, that if things can be put before them plainly, it is best that they should be. Curiosity

and imagination are far more dangerous in their effects than any realities. Evil in a fancy dress is interesting; in plain clothes, hideous. Let Ina see that there is some mystery about this German baron which prevents Marietta from recognising him, and she will let her thoughts rest upon him — she can scarcely help doing so — with a certain amount of excitement. Say that he is a gambler and a cheat, and she will turn away with disgust.

The carriage came at last from Eaux-Bonnes. We settled that it should take us up the valley to Gabas, return here, and carry us on to Eaux-Bonnes, which Marietta rather wished to see. Our own carriage was to be sent over to meet us there, and take us back to Pau. I looked about for the baron before starting, but could see no trace of him, and I did not like to make any enquiries about him. In fact, there was no excuse for doing so. The drive to Gabas took us up the Val d'Ossau, for the most part a continuation of the splendid rocky wooded ravine in which the hotels and houses of Eaux-Chaudes are built. The Pic du Midi came in sight as we drew near the end of the valley, but at the entrance its peculiarity is nearly lost; it looks only like part of a range of mountains. There was a torrent by the side of the road, as there always is in these mountain districts; the colour of this one was something unrivalled — a most exquisite emerald green — transparent, so that every pebble in its depths could be seen, except when the pure white foam dashed over the rocks embedded in the stream. It was the one glad

living thing in the midst of what was otherwise solemn beauty; for there was deep snow on the road, and the lofty peak stood out in its stern and seemingly unapproachable grandeur, closing up the valley as if to warn us from attempting to invade its solitary dominions. The carriage took us as far as it could, and then the driver said he must rest his horses, and we all got out and walked on a little farther; but it was impossible to go far, the snow was too deep. Marietta and Ina were adventurous, and went on some way beyond me. There was something tempting to Ina in the knowledge that if she could only follow the mule track in this direction, she might go over into Spain to the baths of Panticosa. She and Marietta both have a most sunny idea of Spain. I can't say that I have. Whilst they were scrambling about, I walked up and down in the snow, in front of the little inn where our driver was taking his refreshment. So strange, awful, lonely, and sad it was! I could not realise to myself how I found myself there — what chain of events had brought me there, what connection there was between this and the former portions of my life. My darling in her quiet grave seemed an episode in existence. She seemed to have been lent me for so short a time, almost, I could have said, for no purpose, at least, connected with this world. And that thought carried me on to the great hidden purpose for which we all live — the purpose for which all these mighty works of nature, the giant mountains and rocks and precipices, were formed to be as they are. I was scarcely conscious of

anything about me as I paced up and down in this dreamy abstraction of thought, when I was interrupted by a gentleman — I must, I suppose, call him so — who came out of the inn, looked me full in the face, then stopped, and apologised for interrupting me; but "as we were a party of ladies, perhaps he might be allowed to suggest that it would be as well if we were to return quickly. Our driver was not a very sober individual, and he and the landlord of the inn were likely to take more than was desirable if he were allowed to remain too long." I thanked him, not perhaps as heartily as I ought, for I recognised him directly as Baron von Bronnen. We passed each other in the corridor of the hotel last evening. He proposed to go and tell the driver to get the carriage ready, and I thanked him; and he went into the house, but returned almost immediately, and entered into conversation, all the while, as I could see, furtively looking up the road to watch if Marietta was coming. What he said was very ordinary and unimportant, except that he took especial pains to repeat several times that he was on his way to Switzerland; that he wished to compare the Alps and the Pyrenees, implying that he was very fond of science, and particularly interested in geology. I asked him if he had ever been in Spain. "No; he had often wished to go, and it was very tantalising to be so near and to be unable to do so. But at present it was impossible. Switzerland was his destination, and to Switzerland he must go." He did not wait to give the same information to Marietta, for

as soon as he saw her drawing near, he made me a most elaborate bow, and walked away. What became of him I could not quite make out. He must have frightened the driver greatly; for the man came out apologising, quite humbly, for having kept us so long, though really I should not have been inclined myself to make any complaint of his dilatoriness. Marietta was amused at my *rencontre*, and we both congratulated ourselves that the baron's destination was Switzerland, or, as Marietta suggested with great probability, the German watering-places, with their gambling-tables. We had only time for a hasty luncheon when we got back to the Hôtel Baudot, and started again immediately for Eaux-Bonnes, which I can imagine is a pleasanter place to be in for the summer than Eaux-Chaudes, though it certainly is not so beautiful. The ravine is more open, and the cliffs are not so striking, but the Pic de Gers, just above the village, is very grand. I call the place a village, yet really it is only a collection of hotels and boarding-houses, shut up at this season, and, in consequence, looking very dismal. We left Eaux-Bonnes about half-past three, and were at Pau by seven. There was a kind of home feeling in being in our own apartments again, but there can be no real rest for me yet.

Pau: December 4. — Settled Ina with Mrs. Strangways, paid a last visit to the cemetery, and gave all directions for the cross and for the stone over the grave, which is essential here, if one wishes to preserve the spot undesecrated. I have arranged that it is to

be mine *à perpetuité* by actually buying the ground. Without this, after a certain number of years — I forget how many, but really a very few — there would, I am told, be a right to make use of it for another grave. All this is very dreadful to us; but I never can understand the Southern view of death and its attendant circumstances. Everything is so rapid, so irreverent — as if when the spirit had departed, the body had lost all sacredness. There may be splendid funeral trappings, and a grand service performed over the dead; but the beauty, the hallowed poetry of feeling associated with the green grave in an English churchyard is not to be found. Such at least has been the result of my own observation and experience.

We travel to-morrow, partly by diligence, partly by railway, and mean to sleep at Bayonne, and drive over to Biarritz the next day. Whether we shall go further, or return here, depends upon what we hear from Mrs. Davidson. I was tempted at first to cheer Ina by suggesting that we should very likely come back, and not attempt the Spanish journey, but in my heart I do not believe we shall return; and I am sure it is a mistake in any case to buoy a young person up with unfounded hopes. A few experiences of disappointment will then entirely check their confidence in one's words. So I always try to put things before them exactly as they are. And Ina is making up her mind to be brave, and to face the probability that she will not see us again for three or four weeks. I have told her also precisely what I feel about Marietta's

remaining with her aunt. Being naturally hopeful, she does not dwell upon the possibilities which may make the stay absolutely unavoidable, and I am well contented to leave her without this additional anxiety. Drayton starts for England to-morrow with a cousin of Colonel Strangways, who promises to take charge of her. She longs to see the little ones; but a large piece of her heart is left here.

CHAPTER VIII.

Friday, December 5: *Biarritz.* — We started at nine from Pau. Dear Ina breakfasted with us, and kept up bravely till it came to just the last moment, and then I am afraid we all broke down; but I do hope and trust the separation will be very short. We had a dull day for our journey to Bayonne, and passed through an uninteresting country. Orthez we could see nothing of, and Dax, which seems rather a picturesque old town, is only associated in my mind with the railway station at which we had to wait three hours. In a few months they hope to have the railway completed to Pau. There was no private waiting-room, of course, and the officials were inclined at first to turn us out from the public room like the rest of the world, and make us provide for ourselves as we could; but we threw ourselves upon their mercy, and at last obtained permission to remain, and by the aid of a fire, books, and a sofa, we made ourselves very comfortable. If we had been really energetic travellers, we should have gone out to see something of the town; but we were both tired, and I suspect we should have had to walk a considerable way before we reached anything at all interesting.

These short days give one no opportunity of seeing

the country: it was dark several hours before we reached Bayonne. In fact we did not arrive there till half-past nine at night. The Hôtel St. Etienne was rough and primitive, and looked dirty, but proved clean. They gave us a tolerable supper, and we were thankful to go to bed. In the morning Marietta and I agreed that it would be as well to make some enquiries about our possible Spanish journey, and we went off to the consul, and gained from him all the necessary information as to money. He does not foresee any difficulty for us, as the railway to Madrid is open a good part of the way, and the intervals are traversed by Diligences in regular communication. He advises us to go straight through at once without stopping, but this I feel would be quite impossible. We should both be completely knocked up. Marietta herself, anxious though she is, owned that it would be more than she could bear. The omnibus to Biarritz goes several times a day, but we did not start till the afternoon, for we wanted to see something of Bayonne. It is more interesting and more Spanish-looking than Bordeaux. The narrow arcaded streets are picturesque; and there is an interest, too, in the traces of the near vicinity of Spain, the advertisements and names being so constantly Spanish as well as French. We went round the fortifications — triple lines of earthworks, forming a charming walk, and commanding a view of the Pyrenees and the two little rivers which join here. But the mountains had lost their grandeur, and I sighed for the Pic du Midi. The cathedral

interested me from the singular absence of any figures of the Blessed Virgin, or any allusion to her worship, either in the ornaments of the church, or the archbishop's address to his people pasted on the doorway, otherwise there is no particular beauty in it. Its style is late Gothic, and there are some tolerable modern painted-glass windows. Bayonne seems to me a hundred years behind the civilised world, but my acquaintance with it is slight, and perhaps I do it injustice. Marietta was amused by it, and I feel that the novelty and change must be of service to us both, in spite of all drawbacks.

The four o'clock omnibus brought us on here (to Biarritz) through a heathery moorland country betokening an approach to the sea. Immediately around Bayonne avenues of trees in their autumnal colours (for they are not yet quite bare) gave a richness to the view, and the old grey town looked quietly cheerful, and out of the noise and stir of the world, so that I thought it might be a pleasant place to live in. History, however, would tell a different tale of it. Biarritz was a kind of fishing village originally, now villas and hotels are interspersed amongst the poor cottages. The houses have a yellow tint, and the blinds are a bright green, and there is a certain ruggedness and disorder about every thing which is picturesquely French. The Hôtel d'Angleterre, which stands in a kind of square close to the sea, is very comfortable. We have two bedrooms and a little sitting-room made up for perpetual summer — no carpets, and

white window curtains; but as we are sitting now without a fire, and don't feel the need of one, the summer tone does not signify.

As regards visitors, the place is almost deserted, the Davidsons being the only persons besides ourselves who are in this hotel, but they are likely to remain here; they find the climate so pleasant — mild, but not as relaxing as Pau. We have had very little satisfactory conversation as yet. They are pleasant but cautious people, and I must see Mrs. Davidson alone before I can get from her all she has to tell. To-night we were all together in the public *salle*, where we dined, and I could gain nothing but general facts. One thing of importance we have, however, learnt, that Mrs. Randolph really is at Madrid, or has been there till within the last few days. This so far settles our plans that we have a definite point before us. If there had been any uncertainty, I should have unquestionably declined undertaking a journey into Spain at this season of the year with only Marietta. It is not a country in which two ladies can wander about alone searching for another lady; but Mr. Davidson tells me we may get to Madrid now without difficulty. Marietta is so infinitely relieved: it is quite touching. "Ah, *carissima!*" she exclaimed, as she knelt down beside me in the *salle à manger*, quite regardless of the presence of strangers, "you are my guardian angel, my mother. God is so good to me in giving you to me. And we will see my poor aunt; we will bring her away; we will persuade her to come back

to England with us. She will be safe there." Mrs. Davidson, the most quiet, reserved, undemonstrative of Englishwomen, looked on in surprise. Mr. Davidson was amused and interested. I quieted the poor child's excitement as well as I could without chilling her. But all this feeling for Mrs. Randolph — it is very strange! And the idea of bringing her back with us to England is something quite new. Besides even now I must hear what Mrs. Davidson has to tell me before I can positively make up my mind what to do. Baron von Bronnen and Lady Chase are not persons I can let Marietta mix herself up with if it can in any way be avoided. The baron, however, one may hope, is by this time on his way to Switzerland.

Saturday, December 6: *Biarritz.* — The first thing this morning was to have my talk with Mrs. Davidson. Marietta had a headache, and did not get up to breakfast. Mr. Davidson went out early, and Mrs. Davidson and I were left in possession of the *salle*. Then came the history I had been wishing for — a very uncomfortable one. It seems that Mrs. Randolph came to Biarritz some weeks ago by herself, or, at least, with only a maid. She had known the Davidsons some years ago, and the acquaintance was renewed, and they were a good deal together, and on very friendly terms, until the appearance of a certain lady calling herself Mrs. Somebody, but who, from Mrs. Davidson's account, must have been Lady Chase. With her came Baron von Bronnen, whom, most strange to say, Mrs. Ran-

dolph received as a friend. He gave himself out as a widower, and the gossiping world settled it that he and Mrs. Randolph were to be married. The Davidsons soon saw what kind of persons these new friends were, and were extremely anxious to keep Mrs. Randolph from them, and did all they could to open her eyes. But it was the old story — the moth flying round the candle; and, at last, there was an open split between her and the Davidsons. Then Mrs. Randolph became extremely ill. She had come to Biarritz for health, her lungs being seriously affected. The doctors ordered her farther south, and she stated that she was going to Malaga. And about three weeks ago she and her maid left Biarritz, Lady Chase and the baron remaining behind for about a week, and then departing, no one knows where. At Valladolid, it seems poor Mrs. Randolph became much worse, and though she managed to get on to Madrid (the very worst place in Europe that she could have chosen), she has been detained there ever since. Mrs. Davidson's informant is a friend, who, with her daughter, happens to be in the same hotel at Madrid. She gives a very bad report of Mrs. Randolph, but says that she is bent upon going south, and will certainly leave Madrid the very first day she can. The climate is so bad: it is death to remain there.

A most grievous history. I feel we can do little or no good by following this unhappy woman, unless we could remain with her, which is an impossibility. Yet I cannot draw back. She is alone, and very ill, and

possibly when it is known that we are watching over her, those who are evidently bent upon making use of her for their own advantage, and for her misery, may for a time be kept aloof. I say *for her misery*, for Mrs. Davidson assures me there can be no doubt whatever that her money is the object of attraction; and that if this Baron, who has really lost his wife, can but persuade her to marry him, it will not signify how soon afterwards she dies.

I have one thought in my mind, which strengthens my decision as regards the journey, though I do not venture to suggest it to Marietta. In the event of Mrs. Randolph's death, I suspect there would be considerable difficulty in getting possession of Mr. Randolph's legacy. It would be too sad to let it all fall into the hands of Lady Chase and the Baron, and it infallibly would if cheating and lies could effect their purpose. I wrote to Marietta's lawyer from Pau, asking him what I could do in case we met with Mrs. Randolph, and he has given me what he says is the best advice in his power; but he adds that no one can really compel her to do what she ought — which is to sign a paper that he has drawn up, though of course legal measures may be taken if she should refuse. Still I mean to try. Marietta, in her youthful contempt of all pecuniary transactions, would think herself mean if she were to mix up any idea of personal advantage with this search after her aunt: but there is no doubt that a very great deal of her future comfort depends upon something being done to secure her rightful claim,

and there is no one but myself who can take any steps in the matter; so I shall act, and say nothing to her, but allow her to feel that the journey is, on her part, simply one of disinterested affection and duty. I went to see her after my conversation with Mrs. Davidson, and told her the outline of what I had heard, omitting everything that was only conjecture; and when I said that we would leave Biarritz on Monday, the tears rushed to her eyes, and all she could say was — "My poor uncle! he would bless you, as I do." It was evidently a great weight off her mind, and she wanted to get up and help me in any preparations which might be necessary; but her head was still bad, so I made her lie still, and went off to settle everything with Mr. Davidson, who was going into Bayonne, and undertook to bring us back our passports, about which I spoke to the Consul yesterday. He promised also to provide us with some Spanish money, and to secure our places in the Spanish Diligence. We shall not leave Bayonne till the middle of the day, and must travel all night — a most unpleasant arrangement, and one which will entirely prevent our seeing the most beautiful parts of the road, — but it cannot be helped.

When all this business was transacted, I went out for a quiet walk by myself. At this season of the year Biarritz is like a little seaside village, and one can do just as one likes. The square (in which are the hotels) is the chief thing to remind one that it is a fashionable watering-place; in other parts the small houses are dotted about, mixed up with the original

fishing-hamlet, in very primitive fashion. The Empress Eugénie's square and ugly, but I have no doubt very comfortable, residence stands by itself, at about half a mile from the village, and close upon the shore. A hundred years hence there may be trees and flowers about it, but it will take nearly that time, I should think, to make them grow. Still the whole place is picturesque and pleasant. The country immediately around is open, broken, and heathery. The rocks on the shore are very fine, and the sea-view magnificent. I kept on the top of the cliffs this morning at first, so as to command the sea-view; and at last found myself by an old tower, from which I could look over the bay to the mountains of Spain. Then I descended, and wandered along the firm smooth sand — so enticing for a walk, that I went on and on till I found the sun too powerful, and was glad to seek something like shelter under a dark cliff. There I seated myself, turning away from Biarritz, and looking towards the hills of Spain — purple, jagged, stretching away to the province of Guipuzcoa; the mountain called "Tres Coronas" standing out like a fortress in the background. The sea was calm in the distance, but long heavy waves were rolling in upon the beach, lulling one with their regular constant rush. The sound just suited the day — a delicious blending of the freshness of December with the satisfying yet not overpowering heat of summer.

I sat there with the full warmth of the sun upon me, and revelled in the rich colouring, the sharp out-

lines, and the dreamy mystery of those unknown hills, with the waves of the Bay of Biscay washing their base; and felt — what one so very rarely does feel — that the romance of existence was not dead, but only sleeping, buried for a while under care and sorrow, but ready to wake up again in vigour whenever the pressure may be removed. And that kind of mountain beauty always makes me think of the loveliness of another world. It is, like the glimpses which the Bible gives us of Heaven, distinct in general colouring, though vague in detail; and so my thoughts travelled on to the dear child who is always present to me now, and I was soothed with the fancy that even in her present state she might be enjoying a perception of beauty which here she never had the power of imagining, much less realising. I was sure, after that hour on the shore, that the change was doing me good; and though the keen heartache often comes back, it is not what it was that night at Eaux-Chaudes, when I felt so nervously miserable, that I began to consider seriously whether it would be right to undertake the Spanish journey, and whether I ought not rather to get home as fast as I could.

In the afternoon, Mrs. Davidson took me for a walk to the Protestant burying-ground, really part of a Roman Catholic churchyard. There was a lovely view from it of the Spanish hills, and a low ridge of the snowy Pyrenees, far off on the horizon, and looking like petrified foam of the sea. Mrs. Davidson pointed out the grave of a Mrs. Penrhyn, and asked if she could

be any relation of Ina's. I was surprised that she knew anything about the family, till I found that John Penrhyn had been here, and had talked about us. I am afraid, from what Mrs. Davidson said, that he also made acquaintance with Baron von Bronnen and Lady Chase — dangerous society for a young man!

Sunday, December 7: *Biarritz.* — Another deliciously warm day. The English full service, which is still kept up, was an immense comfort. The chapel was very plain — little more than a room; but nothing better can be expected abroad, and I was too thankful to criticise. We were surprised to find a very fair congregation. Marietta had lost her headache, and was able to go with me. After church we went to the cliffs, and really could scarcely make up our minds to leave them. The waves were wonderful — dashing against the huge, sharp, hollowed rocks, and tossing their foam to the height of forty or fifty feet; or rushing through natural arches, and when stopped by receding waves, leaping up frantically and exultingly; and again rolling back into the arches, to be sent forward again with a sound like booming cannon. And all the while the sea beyond was quite calm, the sky clear and blue, the sunlight sparkling on the water, and turning the leaping spray into soft rainbows. It was the most perfect sea I had ever looked upon, and certainly the most enjoyable. It cheered me, too, to watch Marietta's delight in it. She was like a child in her ecstasy. It is one of her peculiarities — or rather, I suspect, it is part of her Italian nature — to be ab-

solutely absorbed in the present, whatever that may be. We had luncheon and went to afternoon prayers (there was no sermon), and then returned again to the cliffs. The sea was even finer than before, the foam along the open bay tossing itself so as to hide the bases of the Spanish hills. We waited till the mountains became a deep purple, and one bright sunset light, deep red, spread and spread, and saturated the sky with brilliancy — long lines of crimson shading into pale-grey, and again melting into the palest, purest green. We had a quiet *table-d'hôte* dinner, only ourselves and the Davidsons, and went out afterwards to enjoy the moonlight in the Port des Pêcheurs. If I had a wish just now, I think it would be to send for Ina, stay here for a week, and then go back to England.

CHAPTER IX.

December 10: *Burgos, Fonda de la Norte.* — At last in Spain: but oh! we have had such a weary journey, and are so tired and ill! It has been our first experience of travelling by night in a Diligence, and we earnestly desire it may be our last. But I must give the details. We parted from the Davidsons and Biarritz yesterday about twelve o'clock, and went by the little omnibus to Bayonne. There the regular Spanish Diligence took us up, and at one o'clock we were on our road to Madrid, and fairly comfortable, for we had the *coupé* to ourselves. The road bordered the sea, and the hills were almost mountainous, the Tres Coronas being especially striking; so that there was a good deal to interest us in the scenery — to say nothing of the amusement of watching a boy on a donkey, who raced the Diligence into St. Jean de Luz. Then came the Bidassoa, and all its associations, to add to its beauty; for it is extremely pretty, wide, curving, and clear, with green wooded meadows forming its shelving banks; and crossing the bridge we were actually on Spanish ground, and the Spanish officials, wrapped in their grandee cloaks, came up and examined our passports. The luggage was left to be inspected at Irun, where they detained us for about

half an hour. When we started again we found, to our dismay, that the third place in the *coupé* was to be occupied by a Spanish officer, who would smoke, and brought with him a most insufferable odour of garlic. What to do we could not imagine. Marietta put down the window, which made us very cold; but anything was better than the fumes we had before, and we really desired to give our companion a hint that the smoke was disagreeable. We were not communicative, of course, for we had no language, except a very few words of Spanish; and I am afraid the poor man found his position anything but agreeable. It soon grew very dark, so that we lost all the beautiful scenery in approaching St. Sebastian; and when we drove into the old town, at seven o'clock, it was raining fast. The Diligence stopped in a kind of square, and we were turned out into the rain, to find our way as we could to the *fonda*, or hotel, happily not far off. Rough, and unfurnished, and odorous with any but sweet odours, was the large *salle*, in which all the travellers were expected to make the best use of a very short time, and partake of supper, soup, and bouilli, and all the usual provisions for such an occasion — tolerably well cooked, though rather greasy. Marietta and I were resolved to make the best of everything, and partake of a decent meal whenever we could get it, upon the chance of not finding any when we wished for it; but I was already tired and headachy, and not much inclined to eat; so my meal was soon over, and I was able to draw my chair apart, and watch the

strange new scene, and wonder how I came there. There were no distinctions of class: rough loud-talking men were eating voraciously, and almost equally rough-looking girls waiting upon them. I observed no particular difference of costume, only a general uncouthness and primitiveness; but a Diligence *table d'hôte* is never, I suppose, very refined. Everyone was very civil to us. There were one or two Frenchwomen, who had been travelling in the interior of the Diligence; but we were the only English. We made our first attempt at Spanish in asking for what we wanted, and were tolerably successful in making ourselves understood.

When we went out again into the darkness, it was raining fast; and we could not tell where to find the Diligence, and there was no one to help us; but we made our way to it at last, and were delighted to see no trace of our Spanish officer. We had understood that he was going on to Madrid, but I suspect our open window had frightened him from the *coupé*, and he had taken refuge in the interior of the vehicle. A most rejoicing circumstance that was for us. Marietta ensconced herself in one corner — I made myself comfortable in the other; and, with a very fervent hope that we might be left without any more intruders, we prepared, if possible, to go to sleep.

Being on Spanish ground, we had a team of mules to the Diligence, eleven at least, conducted by a man wrapped in a great cloak, with a hood like a monk's cowl drawn over his head. He rode on one of the foremost mules, and allowed the others, who apparently

had very little guidance except their own "sweet will," to follow pretty much as they chose. The lights attached to the Diligence threw a ghastly glare just in front, making the darkness beyond still more dark; and every five minutes the muleteer uttered a kind of wild yell, which was I believe an encouraging or threatening admonition to his mules. When the road became steep, he dismounted and walked, and then the cries became more frequent. So we went on all through the night. I had a perception of ascending hills slowly, and descending them quickly; but the only fixed impression left on my mind is that of waking up continually from an uneasy sleep, and always hearing the same cry, seeing the same glare of unnatural orange-yellow light around me, and the dim forms of straggling mules, headed by an awful figure, wearing a monk's cowl, who seemed to be upon the point of leading us all into a deep archway beyond which was impenetrable night.

It is provoking to have lost a country in this way, and all the more because I suspect there was a good deal of beautiful scenery in that earlier part of our journey, whilst the latter part was indescribably dreary. We stopped at six o'clock, in the morning, — dark still, — except for a pale moonlight, veiled by a cloudy sky. There was no town, no village or hamlet, to be seen — nothing but hills, not high, but sharp and rugged, and brought into distinctness by the moon gleaming on the snow. Around us was apparently a barren waste. A long low building, looking like a

stable, was visible at some little distance. The mules were taken out of the Diligence; every one except ourselves dismounted, and we were left alone.

I supposed we were to change mules again, and, feeling hungry, I had recourse to our luncheon-basket. (I forgot to say that at Biarritz we had provided ourselves with cold chicken and a lavish supply of cracknels, which I stumbled upon accidentally just before we started.)

Presently a man came up to the Diligence, opened the door, and asked if we would not get out. "No," I said decidedly, and went on eating. Soon after came another with the same question. "No," I still said. Then followed a third, seeming much surprised at our position; and at last Marietta and I looked at each other, and thought we had blundered. We made out the word *fonda* from this new man, and he pointed to the low building towards which we had seen the mules making their way; and we discovered that we were expected to follow in the same direction — that the building was a *fonda*, and we were to breakfast there.

Such a place — and such a breakfast! A wooden shed, dirty floor, dirty tables, strewn with the remains of half-eaten repasts; cups, plates, and dishes in wild confusion; an unwashed waiter rushing about to clear a little space for us, bringing us each a tiny cup filled with a thick brown liquid, in which a spoon could almost stand upright, and then taking up some sugared sponge-cake in his black fingers, and offering it to us!

I tried the liquid. I had always had an ideal of Spanish chocolate, and therefore had ordered it; but it was nothing but muddy cinnamon, and I put it down as absolutely undrinkable. Happily, I did not want it, but it was nauseous to me beyond expression; and I was beginning to feel so ill and tired, that it quite upset me. Marietta took to it more kindly, and was far less tired, and I think rather amused to find herself in such a strange place. We were directed from the *fonda* to the railway-station of Olazo Goitia. It was another shed equally dirty, and more empty — not even a bench to sit upon, and not the slightest appearance of a fire, though it was bitterly cold. A man did, however, after a time, bring in a seat, and set fire to some sticks, and we managed to get a little warmth into us. But we had to wait two hours before the train started. The luxury of the railway-carriage cannot be described! It was like a comfortable house, and at first we had it to ourselves. But at Vittoria a Spanish party with an English friend joined us. If I had not been so desperately sleepy, and feeling so unwell, I might have been amused with talking to them; for they were pleasant refined people, and very courteous. As it was, I said but little. Vittoria is a large, bright, handsome-looking town; but the country around, at this season of the year, is intensely bare, and must always be stern and rocky, and only in parts grand, from the height of the cliffs. In fact, it was nothing but dreariness all the way to Burgos — partly I dare say from my own feelings, partly from the

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fact that it is winter and this is a corn country, and of course there are no signs of vegetation; but partly also, I suspect, from a natural inherent absence of all which really constitutes cheerful scenery. The rocks are red and bare, and the soil is the same; and there are no villages, no trees — nothing to make a variety! And then the cold! If it should be worse at Madrid, what will it be like? We were at the Burgos railway-station by two o'clock. Unfortunately, at Pau we could not get the new edition of "Murray," and so chose a French guide-book instead — a great misfortune, from which we are likely to suffer much. Anyhow, we did not know where to go, and in our anxiety all our Spanish forsook us; and we were obliged at last to trust ourselves to the guidance of a little native Flibbertigibbet, who professed to speak French, and indeed did speak it. He released us from a crowd of dirty men, who pressed about us till we were in despair; but I had a misgiving that he was himself only a decoy, and would lead us astray. He brought us to the Fonda de la Norte, assuring us that it was the best in Burgos; and if it is so, I can only say, "May it never be my fate to visit the best hotel in Burgos again!" But Spanish hotels, like Spanish towns, are not to be judged by a comparison with those of France; and Burgos looks like what it is, a city in its dotage — the houses in decay, and the life which still lingers in it, uncertain and weak. We had no escape from our guide, and so were obliged to accept his introduction to the brick-floored passages and dark low rooms of the Fonda de

la Norte. Happily, they gave us a *salon* looking out into a narrow street, as well as a bedroom with two beds; and we ordered a fire, and found out that there was a *table d'hôte;* and then, though it was getting dark, and we were extremely tired, we both agreed that it would be impossible to resist a visit to the cathedral, which was close to us. As for seeing it, that was impossible. We only had an idea of something wonderfully perfect in size, and delicate in carving, and impressive as a whole; but we reserved a closer inspection for the morning, and went back to a Spanish dinner in a dingy room with third-rate Spaniards, and no vestige of a lady. Almost I began to repent the journey; yet the people are very civil, and the waiter was really distressed when he found I could not eat. We went to bed early, shivering with the cold, and our bedroom had the smallest possible allowance of furniture and no fireplace; and as I lay awake, really feeling extremely unwell, if not absolutely ill, I had time for dismal forebodings. Marietta, I hope, did not know how entirely oppressed I felt. She has been quite unhappy enough all day at seeing me so tired, and yet, now and then, the thought of two "unprotected females" adventuring into this strange land strikes her with a sense of the ludicrous — and she laughs, and then I laugh. We are both better this morning, and have really lionised Burgos; walked about the bustling marketplace, with its very inferior shops and whitewashed arcades; visited the Town Hall, and done homage to the bones of the Cid and his wife

Ximena, which are kept in a large chest, and might of course be any other persons' bones; and last, though not least, renewed our acquaintance with the cathedral. It was there, in fact, that our morning was chiefly spent. I must leave "Murray" to describe it, and can only note the general impression. Externally, one chiefly remarks the elaborate delicacy of the open-worked spires and the highly-finished portals. Internally, it gives a greater impression of size and richness than any French cathedral I have seen; and the woodwork of the *retablo*, or reredos, for which Spain is celebrated, is something wonderful. Many of the figures are the size of life, but the general effect of the building is destroyed by the way in which what is called the *coro*, or central choir, is screened from the rest of the building. This *coro* is not at the extremity of a long nave, but meets one almost at the front entrance. The screen (or *reja*) is rich beyond description, but still it is a screen, and one does not care for the delicate workmanship of details; what one wants is the effect of the "long-drawn aisle and fretted vault," and this is lost. I have never seen anything more beautiful than some of the side-chapels, that of one of the Great Constables of Castile especially: it was as large as an ordinary church, and filled with magnificent sculpture, wreathed pillars, carved canopies, and heraldic decorations — all the work of Italian artists. It certainly does not harmonise with the impression one has of Spain and its chivalrous barbarism. Massive richness is the idea I have brought away with

me from the cathedral of Burgos. I was quite startled to see an enormous block of polished jasper displayed as one of the treasures of the Constable's Chapel. There is no lightness or sunshine about the building. The colouring is dark, the architecture noble but ponderous. In fact, the building struck me as being what one imagines the Spanish character to be — sterling and grand in its original elements, and capable of being highly civilised and ornamented; but the ornamentation seems an adjunct to the original design, not an essential part of it. We start for Valladolid at three o'clock. I am really not equal to going farther. Strictly speaking, and if we were sightseers, we ought to remain here till to-morrow, and drive to the Carthusian convent of Miraflores, and if possible visit the Tomb of the Cid, at some distance beyond. The Carthusian convent is finer, so it is said, than anything in Spain; but at this time of the year, and with a pressing motive for continuing our journey, it is impossible to think of it. If it had been summer, and we had both been equal to the exertion, we might have gone quite early in the morning; but winter and illness oblige one to give up a great deal. I confess to having such very uncomfortable associations with Burgos and the Fonda de la Norte that I am only anxious to get away from the place, and at the present moment I feel but little regret at leaving Miraflores unvisited.

CHAPTER X.

Valladolid, Fonda del Siglo: December 11. — Only time to note that it is very cold, that the sky is dull and grey, and that we have not seen the sun since we entered Spain: also that we are told this is the usual winter aspect. We were travelling from three till seven o'clock, the country more dreary than ever; no hills, only rocky barren plains, and squalid villages. Two Spanish gentlemen in our railway-carriage were very civil: one spoke French, so we got on very well; and I was feeling better, and altogether more up to my work. Also I was so glad to have escaped from Burgos, and Marietta rejoiced in being nearer Madrid. This is a much brighter, pleasanter place than Burgos. I can quite fancy it an ancient capital. The hotel is paradise compared with the Fonda de la Norte. We have actually two good-sized rooms, comfortably though rather quaintly furnished, with windows opening on a balcony, and old-fashioned beds, with clean white curtains, making me think of England. They gave us, on our arrival last night, a comfortable tea *à l'Anglaise*, except that the butter was not very eatable; but we are told that we must not expect butter in Spain. The only thing which really disturbed us was the liquid which was brought us when we asked for a

little brandy to put in our travelling-flask. It was perfectly white, what they call *aguardiente*, and the odour was something unbearable. If I were to come to Spain again, I would lay in a stock of good brandy, for it is an absolute necessity in some cases when travelling, and we have none now.

I am just writing up my journal, before we start by the night-train for Madrid. The morning has been devoted to lionising, for there is a good deal to see in this old town. We breakfasted at eleven at the *table d'hôte* or (as the Spaniards call it) the *mesa redonda*. The company (all Spanish) were of a higher class than those at Burgos; several of them spoke English. I suspect the Spaniards have a greater affinity, in taste and feeling, with the English than with the French. They no more forget the French invasion, and the aid they received from the English, than the Americans do the War of Independence, and the help of the French in the establishment of their Government. The breakfast was French in most respects — *café* and *côtelettes* for those who did not choose to have chocolate, with regard to which I am a coward since my experience at the railway-station of Olazo Goitia. The cathedral, the museum, and some churches occupied us all the morning. The Spanish Gothic architecture is much more elaborate and highly finished than either the French or English. The façade of San Gregorio is wonderful. There seems to be a mixture in it of the Moorish delicacy of workmanship; and the wreathed spiral columns of the Cloister are perfectly exquisite. One does so

regret that photographs are not to be had here. Valladolid is dull as to the bustle of the streets, for there is nothing going on except in the Plaza Mayor; but it is white and clean, and the squares are broad and open. The great glory of the place is the wood sculpture, one cannot call it carving, of individuals whom I honestly confess I never heard of before — Juni and Hernandez. There is one room in the museum given up to it, and anything more startling and awful in the way of works of art I never saw. The figures are as large as life and painted; and one might fancy they would be grotesque, but they are not. The subjects are almost all sacred, and their truthfulness is such that one can scarcely bear to look at those representing the sufferings of our Blessed Lord. The kind of wooden sculpture is, I fancy, peculiar to Spain. There were specimens of it in the *retablo* of Burgos Cathedral. Colleges are numerous here; I believe they are chiefly in the hands of the Jesuits. Of course we ladies could see nothing of them except the outside, with a glimpse into the *patios* or courtyards. Our commissionnaire expressed his disapprobation of religious orders in general, and seemed to rejoice that the town was freer from monks than it used to be. Perhaps, though, he said it only because he thought he should flatter our supposed Protestant prejudices.

We dine in about an hour's time, and set off at seven o'clock for Madrid.

CHAPTER XI.

Madrid, December 12: *Fonda Peninsulares.* — Such an experience! Almost such adventures! But we have been helped through them all. A Spanish party started from Valladolid with us at seven o'clock in the evening. We had made acquaintance at the *Mesa Redonda*, and they were extremely good-natured, and very courteous and refined in manner. We all agreed to get into the same railway carriage — three ladies and three gentlemen — and managed so to establish ourselves as to go to sleep very comfortably. Most foolishly, I insisted upon having a little window open close to me; I thought it necessary, and so it was in one respect; but the night was bitterly cold, and I suspect I shall suffer for my imprudence. We went on till about eleven o'clock, then the train came to a final stand-still under a rough covered station, with rows of sheds on each side; the centre occupied by about eleven Diligences, preparing to set off for Madrid, each with a team of ten or eleven mules. The said mules were brought up by their respective muleteers, with the usual accompaniment of cries and exhortations; amongst them rushed from Diligence to Diligence the passengers, turned out from the railway carriages, with the exception of the few who found their way to the dirty Fonda,

where there was the ordinary array of unwashed waiters and half-emptied cups and saucers. The darkness of the night, only broken by the glare of the station lights, the cries of the muleteers, the trampling of the mules, the vociferations of the travellers, and the rush of rough peasants and railway officials, with here and there a lady or gentleman, French or Spanish, as the case might be, were perfectly bewildering. Where to go or what to do we could not tell. We had lost our Spanish friends in the *mêlée*, and the little stock of the language at our disposal all but completely forsook us: and then — which was our Diligence? We had through-tickets to Madrid, and had been told that we were to be taken up by a certain *Diligencia de la Norte y Mediodia*. But no one acknowledged such a name. We showed our tickets — begged for help — every man we spoke to shook his head, and knew nothing. And there were the Diligences driving off, one after another, till it was evident we should soon be left to solitude and the Villalba railway station! We went to the Fonda in despair: we were half famished, and very cold, and a little frightened. Two gentlemen were sitting at a table with their backs to us. A Spanish courier was talking to them. They looked like English-men, and my hope revived. I thought I might venture to speak to them, but before I could quite make up my mind to this, one of them turned round, and, to my unutterable relief, I saw Mr. Neville. His companion was Henry Anson. What I said I really don't know. Marietta almost screamed with delight. There

is no need to say how cordial and affectionate we all were, or how entirely the two gentlemen entered into our situation and offered to aid us in our perplexities. But there was an obstacle. They also had a ticket of *correspondencia;* they also could only travel by a certain Diligence, which, alas! was not ours. The courier was sent off to enquire for the *Norte y Mediodia*, and came back baffled, saying, that he could not find it, and that the two gentlemen must hasten to their own vehicle, which was just going; and adding, for our consolation, that we should do well to look after ourselves, for these Spanish Diligence *conducteurs* would just as soon leave us behind as take us on. Mr. Neville hesitated what to do. He could scarcely have helped us by remaining behind, but I am sure he would have done so if it had not happened that just at that moment, as we were standing together in front of the Fonda, our Spanish railway companions came up, quite easy, quite cool, and calm, and satisfied. "We were not to distress ourselves. They were in the same condition as ourselves. It was quite true there was no Diligence ready for us, but there would be one in a few minutes. We need not make ourselves in the least uncomfortable." With this assurance Mr. Neville and Henry Anson thought they might be satisfied. Their courier hurried them away, and we said good-bye, and were told just as they were leaving us that they meant to be at the Fonda Peninsulares, and that we must let them know where we were. Then the last Diligence drove off; and I confess that, in spite of

the assurance of our friends, I did not feel quite comfortable. However, in a few minutes another lumbering vehicle appeared. Marietta and I mounted into the *coupé*, by the side of a stout Spanish gentleman. Our friends ensconced themselves in the interior, and off we set. It was a repetition of the St. Sebastian night, except that the eleven Diligences made it a point of honour to race; and on we went through the night, always at the same speed, till we came to the Sierra Guadarrama, which, naturally enough, we ascended more leisurely. Once at the summit, we descended at an alarming pace. There was a moon, but the light showed nothing except the bank at the side of the road. I tried to sleep; but the back of the *coupé* was made to open and shut, so as to admit of a communication with the interior; and it so happened that the fastening was broken; and thus, instead of having a steady resting-place for my head, I swayed backwards and forwards, and nodded, and woke, and tried to sleep again, and again woke, and was cheered by catching a few words of a conversation between Marietta and our Spanish friend, as to the extreme probability that we should be upset.

But we were not upset. We arrived safely at our place of destination, a broad plain, surrounded by mountains, bare, craggy, and covered with snow, which glittered in the moonlight. The door of the Diligence was opened, and we were invited to descend. I saw no building, and the wind was piercing. Unprepared for any such sudden termination and only just wakened

from sleep, I lost my gloves and my Shetland veil — the latter an irremediable misfortune. They must, I was sure, be in the Diligence. The *conducteur* coolly lighted a little candle, and began to search the *coupé*. Marietta stood by like a martyr. I felt very guilty, and the wind — oh! how fiercely keen it was! Presently I put my hand into my pocket, and there was my veil! That Marietta kept her temper and did not reproach me, I consider the highest act of self-control which I ever witnessed. We began to look up in the world after this. There really was a railway station, with a refreshment-room close at hand, though I had not seen it. Marietta, with the most angelic Christian charity, forgot my misdeeds, and brought me a cup of coffee, and I sat down and amused myself with watching a little Spanish child about six years of age, dressed most fashionably, who was seated at a table with a piece of sweet cake in her hand, which she dipped into the thick chocolate, and then ate with the greatest *goût*. I envied her her taste, for I felt that chocolate was one's best resource in this part of the world. At six o'clock we were again in the railway carriage on our way to Madrid. Marietta was greatly excited. The fatigue and annoyance of the journey had made us almost forget its object. But now we were both able to think. Marietta's mind, I could see, dwelt upon the probable condition in which we should find Mrs. Randolph; it was a mixed feeling of anxiety and interest. Like almost all young people, she enjoyed, in spite of herself, the sense of novelty. For

myself, I confess I was far from comfortable, but as I could foresee nothing, it was useless to speculate upon what I might or might not be forced to do. My thoughts rather turned to our meeting with Mr. Neville and Henry Anson, which had at first given me unalloyed pleasure, but which upon consideration I foresaw might involve awkwardness.

The last thing I desired was to throw young Anson and Marietta together, but under such peculiar circumstances how could it be avoided? One thing I was glad of; we were likely to be at different hotels. Mrs. Randolph we had been told was at the Embajadores, and we intended to go there, if possible. Marietta had been anxious that I should write beforehand and engage rooms, but this I would not do, for I felt it to be possible that Mrs. Randolph's friends might be just those whom I might not choose to associate with, and therefore I wished to leave myself free; but we agreed that our first inquiries should be made at the Embajadores. Beyond this I really could do nothing to keep Henry Anson and Marietta apart. Events must go as they might. And having thus settled matters with my conscience, I forced myself to turn away from all doubtful worrying subjects, and looked out of the window. We were passing through a bare, dreary, savage country — all stone and brushwood. Hills there were in the distance, and as there was snow upon them, they really had a claim to the title of mountains; but the high table-land which surrounds Madrid, takes away so much from the apparent alti-

tude of the Guadarrama range that all grandeur is lost. And yet the scene was striking, and in one respect most beautiful. On the other side of the Guadarrama we had seen nothing but cold grey skies, colder and greyer even than in an English autumn. Now the heavens were cloudless, there was neither mist nor vapour; but as the morning dawned, the sky became one pure sheet of liquid gold, gradually melting into deep blue, whilst below stretched the vast sloping yellow plain, broken by rocks, and shaded by the dark spreading brushwood. As a specimen of colour it was to me quite unrivalled, and it has left an impression of an effect which I feel will remain by me when really beautiful scenes have been forgotten. There were a few trees and gardens as we drew near Madrid; but the city stands in a desert, and except for this peculiarity, there is nothing to make the approach to it striking.

We were thoroughly tired by the time we were deposited at the Madrid station, but excitement kept us both up. A Diligence was waiting to take passengers into the town, and we went up to it to secure our places. But we were not to depart so easily. This Diligence was also in *correspondencia;* that is to say, it could only move according to law, and this law had determined that our luggage should be left behind, and that we had no right to a place in the Diligence till it arrived. When we asked the why and wherefore of this strange proceeding, we were told that the luggage from the most distant parts had the precedence. Bay-

onne travellers were the first comers, they had been first served. We, having started only from Valladolid, were provided for afterwards; and as all the luggage could not be conveyed by this particular train, ours was not to arrive till eleven o'clock. In the meantime we were expected to wait at the station.

I think I should have succumbed to this regulation, however inconvenient, but for Marietta. Urged by her, I expostulated as well as I could both with the officials and the *conducteur* of the Diligence, and at last we softened their flinty hearts. Our luggage, we were told, should be sent after us to the Diligence office, and we ourselves should have places in the interior, and be taken into the town. Then all our trouble seemed over. We drove through back streets, such as one always sees in the neighbourhood of a railway station, and which had nothing very peculiar to distinguish them except a certain amount of bustle and brightness, reminding one of Paris; and were finally deposited at the Embajadores, a large handsome-looking hotel on the outside — not quite as good in the inside.

"Were there any English ladies there?" was our first enquiry.

"None."

"Had there been any in the hotel lately?"

"Yes; two or three."

"Where were they now?"

"It was not known."

"Were any of them ill?"

"Yes; one was very ill."

"But where was she gone? Surely they must know. Where were the letters directed?"

The man of whom I asked this question rushed off, and brought back the master of the hotel, a courteous respectable individual, who, to my great satisfaction, spoke French.

"An invalid English lady?" Yes; he knew her. She had been at his house; but she and her maid had left for Valencia three days ago. The climate of Madrid was considered too keen. She had been ordered south. She appeared to be very ill. She was to be at the Fonda del Cid. Marietta looked at me in dismay. I think, poor child, she began to feel that she had been too impatient and urgent in insisting upon this wild search. I would not let her see how vexed I felt, and, without any further remark, I asked if they had apartments for us.

"Yes, certainly."

And we were carried up a broad, not very clean, staircase, and through various passages, and ushered into a small low square room, rather scantily furnished, and with no fire-place. Another room containing two beds opened out of it.

"Was this all they had to offer us?"

"Yes; all. The hotel was quite full. But we should do very well; we should have the advantage of the morning sun."

This in Madrid! A city with one of the coldest winter climates in Europe, built on a table-land more than two thousand feet above the level of the sea! We

declined the tempting offer, and drove off to the Principes. That also was full. Only the Peninsulares was left, at least of those hotels which had been specially recommended, and most unwillingly I told the Commissionnaire who went with us (for we had left the Diligence at the office, and were walking in search of a resting-place) to take us there. He mentioned the Inglaterra, but this I had been warned against as excessively expensive and only frequented by ambassadors and grandees.

We turned into the Calle de Alcalá, a broad handsome street, with trees on each side, and terminated by a stone gateway leading into the Prado. The Peninsulares is a large hotel near the top. It appeared to be everything it should be on the outside, but within there was the same dirty rambling look as at the Embajadores. It must have been originally, I fancy, a nobleman's house. Now the entrance combines the palace and the stable. However, we did find rooms, though only in the *entresol*. They are low and dark, but we are not obliged to live in our bedrooms, which is a great gain. We have a little *salon*, with a large fire-place in one corner, within this is a bedroom, having two beds in deep recesses.

The one great annoyancc is, that there is not a woman-servant in the hotel. The waiter, who speaks French, is, however, very civil. On our arrival we ordered breakfast, (tea and cutlets as usual), sent for the *blanchisseuse*, unpacked the few things we needed, and, in short, set to work to make ourselves at home. And on the whole we have succeeded fairly well

though the walls are very dingy, and the furniture is dark, shabby, and scanty, and without the quaintness which amused us at Valladolid. But Spain is a hundred years behind France, and Madrid, I should think, two hundred behind Paris, in real comfort. We both lay down on our beds and went to sleep after breakfast, for we were thoroughly tired out. Since then we have taken a Commissionaire, and found our way to the post-office; but there were no letters — a great disappointment, though I don't know that we had much right to expect any, at least from England; we have been so uncertain in our movements; and I begged Mrs. Bradshaw to write to Ina, rather than to me, because she would be more sure of getting the letters. Now that I have seen the postal arrangements here, I can well understand how easy it is to miss letters. The names of the persons to whom the Poste Restante letters are addressed are written on a sheet of paper hung up against the wall; a certain number is attached to each name. You go and look at this paper, and then, if you see that there are letters for you, you demand them, first showing your passport and telling your number. A man sits behind a screen, sorting letters into different pigeon-holes, all numbered. He just glances at you, and gives you the letters which happen to be in your hole: but the chances are that there are others which have been mislaid, or have never been marked down on the paper; and in the latter case of course you are certain to lose them, because you would not think of enquiring for them. So

also in reading foreign names there must be a great risk of mistake; and your letters may as likely as not be distributed under the wrong number. Marietta and I came away not at all convinced that we were really *letter-less*. After the post-office search we just crossed the Puerta del Sol, and walked to the end of the Calle de Alcalá, and then came back to the hotel. This first impression of Madrid is singularly bright. The famous Puerta del Sol, the centre of the city in every respect, is an open 'Plaza' into which all the principal streets converge, so that the whole bustle and fashion of the place must pass into it, and through it. What struck me to-day was the finished look of the houses, compared with southern continental cities generally, the handsome dress of the ladies, and the good *turn-outs* in the way of carriages and mules — the latter really very fine animals when properly cared for, as they are here. Marietta and I found no difficulty in going about. People stared at us a little, but not more than was to be expected. Bonnets are becoming common here, unfortunately, but the black lace mantilla is still frequently to be seen. Very picturesque it is, but it can give but little protection to the head.

No doubt it is good to have one's mind diverted from sad thoughts; but I long for rest and quiet, and see no prospect of either. We must write to Valencia, and I suppose go there. Aftèr having come so far it would be foolish to turn back; but it is a greater undertaking than I anticipated. We have as yet seen nothing of Mr. Neville and Henry Anson, but I suppose we shall meet at the five o'clock *table d'hôte*.

CHAPTER XII.

Tuesday, December 16. — *Madrid still.* I meant to have kept a regular journal, but it has been impossible; and as for description, the guide-book does all that. I can but note events, and they are not unimportant. Marietta wrote on Saturday to Valencia. The answer came this morning from Mrs. Randolph's maid, her mistress being too ill to write herself. Mrs. Randolph longed to see Marietta, but there were reasons why she wished her not to go to her for a few days. The maid would write again shortly. They were about to move to the Fonda de Paris. Mrs Randolph's condition was very precarious, and all excitement must be avoided. This was the upshot of the letter. And most awkward it is, but we must wait till we hear further. In the meantime I shall take counsel with Mr. Neville, for he is most singularly mixed up with these matters. We met on the day of our arrival, at the *table d'hôte*, as I expected. It was a mutual pleasure, and I was very thankful, and tried to forget what the Dernham gossips might say. Really I do not know what we should have done without a gentleman belonging to us, for we were the only ladies at table, and the style of the men (I can't possibly call them gentlemen) who were present was quite odious, worse than common or vulgar.

They were evidently not travellers, but business men of some kind: French, Spanish, and English; the three languages were used indiscriminately, but a few words which caught my ear so disgusted me, that I was rejoiced when they adopted Spanish, because then I found it difficult to understand what they said. They took no notice of us, happily, and Mr. Neville, Mr. Anson, and ourselves formed a comfortable little party together. I really tried to engage Mr. Anson in conversation, and I think Mr. Neville was grateful to me; but he himself was abstracted, and did not manage to say much to Marietta; and at last, without any intention, we fell into the wrong order. Young Anson caught Marietta's attention, and it was very soon evident that the old attraction was resuming all its power. Towards the close of the dinner I really could not help talking to Mr. Neville, he had so much to talk about which interested me. It came out by degrees. He is in search of John Penrhyn, or rather he is following him in the hope of carrying him back to England; why, I was not directly told, but Mr. Neville hinted at dangerous companionship, and a young man's wilfulness, till, putting two and two together, and remembering what I had heard at Biarritz, of John Penrhyn's having been there in company, or at least associated with, Baron von Bronnen, I felt I could solve the riddle; and I spoke out openly, and told Mr. Neville of the little that I knew, and we became very sympathetic and mutually interested. It seems that Mr. Neville and Henry Anson were actually on their way

to England, when a letter from the old uncle, who is the guardian of the family, made Mr. Neville feel that it was all-important to get hold of John Penrhyn immediately, and for this purpose he turned southwards, and is now on his way to Cordova and Seville, having learnt that this is the direction in which young Penrhyn has gone. After finding him, he purposes going to Cadiz and Gibraltar, and returning to England by the Peninsular and Oriental steamer. I asked if Henry Anson was to accompany him. The answer was doubtful. "It would depend upon circumstances." We talked of John Penrhyn, and I said that I was greatly interested in him. Mr. Neville agreed that he was extremely attractive, and very clever. This was what they used to say of his father, and I wanted to hear more substantial praise, but I did not get what I wished. Very high principle — high, that is, as to the standard of right, — but too impulsive, too hasty, wanting in discretion: this is Mr. Neville's report. He himself, I should think, was never wanting in discretion, so perhaps he is a severe judge. But I can see he is uneasy about his young cousin.

After that first day, it was impossible to avoid really making one party. We were all seeing the same things, going to the same places, and if we had tried to avoid each other (I really did make several most conscientious efforts) we could not have succeeded. We were at the Museo on Saturday, and have been there again to-day, revelling in the pictures; Mr. Neville is extremely artistic, and at first he made Henry Anson

jealous by carrying off Marietta to admire his favourites, and then discussing them with her. They stood together for nearly a quarter of an hour looking at the famous Velasquez, *Las Meninas*, in the Salon de Isabel. A fascinating picture it is. Velasquez is in the background, painting Philip III. and his wife; in the centre of the room stands a little princess, by no means beautiful, but the very embodiment of the consciousness of infantine royalty, her young lady attendants gathering round her to amuse her, and a favourite buffoon exhibiting his tricks to please her. The simplicity, the absolute truthfulness of the picture, are entirely satisfying. But my attention was withdrawn from it to Marietta, who stood gazing at it with a look of intense delight, her eyes sparkling, a faint colour tinging her usually pale face, and deepening as from time to time she timidly glanced at Mr. Neville, in reply to some remark of his, or to volunteer some criticism of her own. She really did look beautiful. Mr. Neville is very decided in his tastes, and considers himself a connoisseur in pictures, and he has rather a patronising tone in talking to young girls, which I could see a little provoked Marietta. He would criticise the Velasquez, and call the colouring cold, which perhaps it is. She asserted her admiration timidly, and he smiled in that rather cynical way of his, and turned away, just as if it was not worth while to talk about painting with anyone who understood so little about it. Marietta came back to me, and Henry Anson joined us, and we went round the gallery together, admiring

just what we liked, and thankful not to be obliged to say why. Not but what I should have enjoyed an art lesson from a man like Mr. Neville, if he would have allowed one after all to retain one's own opinion without explanation. But to be led into an argument at every moment, or else to be set down as an idiot, is trying. Every person has a weak point; art I suspect is Mr. Neville's. He is not a conceited man in other matters — and, as a rule, he is remarkably courteous; but with regard to pictures he is a perfect autocrat. Marietta deliberately avoided him the rest of the morning, which I was sorry for. I cannot help thinking he remarked it; and he was not likely to guess the cause.

We were two hours that day in the Museo, devoting ourselves chiefly to Murillo and Velasquez. But the Titians, and Tintorettos, and Raphaels, are most inviting. What one regrets is that the pictures should be so badly arranged, or rather left for the most part without any arrangement; good and bad mingled together, and seen by a misty light which makes its way through glass, green with the dust of ages. The Salon de Isabel is somewhat of an exception. It takes its place with the Tribune of the Pitti, at Florence, and the circular room of the Louvre. To-day we have been to the Academia de San Fernando to see Murillo's *chef d'œuvre* — St. Elizabeth dressing the sores of the sufferers in a hospital. It is a *chef d'œuvre;* for one can no more bear to look at it than one could (without some strong motive of duty) bear to go through the real ordeal.

Madrid strikes me as brighter every day. The sky is still cloudless, the sun powerful in the middle of the day, but towards evening it becomes bitterly cold, and I have suffered from it, and added to a cold caught on our night journey, by standing in the streets to see the Queen as she passed along the Calle de Alcalá on her way to visit the Infant Don Sebastian. She was in a carriage drawn by eight splendid white mules; a troop of cuirassiers and several other carriages followed. The King was with her. She is very stout, grievously plain, even vulgar-looking; her magnificent purple velvet mantilla and white bonnet scarcely making up for the commonness of her face. The King by her side looked only half a man. There was not the slightest enthusiasm. '*Es la reyna*' I heard one man say contemptuously, as if the sight of the Queen was nothing of importance to anyone.

Sunday was quiet, but unfortunately there was no service at the Ambassador's chapel. The chaplain was gone to England. Marietta and I read the English service by ourselves, and then we went out and saw some churches, and walked round the Buen Retiro Gardens, which are pretty and extensive. They were crowded with gay people, and especially with children dressed out in silks and velvets. Returning to the hotel, we encountered a perfect throng coming back from a bull-fight. So much for a Spanish Sunday. The two gentlemen were with us the greater part of the day, and did not go to the bull-fight. Yesterday we went to the Escurial, or, as I have learnt to call it since I have

been in Spain, El Escorial, and the circumstances of the expedition have been important.

Mr. Neville up to that time appeared quite as undecided in his movements as we were, at least he never could tell whether Henry Anson was going on with him to Seville or whether he would return to England by Bayonne. I have been laughing at him a little, ever since we first met, for having a courier. His excuse is that Lady Anson's maternal anxieties had induced him to take one from Bayonne, in order that, if they separated, Henry might not be left alone in the middle of Spain, unable to speak the language. Until yesterday, however, both of them talked as if they were going on together, and Mr. Neville had even proposed to leave the courier as a legacy to me. I should have been only too glad to engage him, for he is extremely civil, and speaks both French and English; but putting aside the question of expense, which would have made it impossible to indulge in such a luxury, the events of yesterday would have quite put a stop to the idea.

We set off for the Escurial at a quarter past seven in the morning, cold, dark, and very miserable; at least I can answer for myself, for I had had but little sleep, my cold being very heavy, and I had nearly lost my voice. The guide-book threatens all visitors to Madrid with severe bronchitis; so I was not quite easy in my mind; and nothing but the impossibility of sending Marietta without me would have induced me to go. Marietta entreated me to give up the expedition; but I am not really delicate, and besides, I did wish above

all things to see the Escurial: so we went. The railway train deposited us at a very short distance from a wretched little village which so closely adjoins the Palace that the cottages seem to belong to it. Every one knows everything about the Escurial, or may know it by reading 'Murray.' I think myself that impressions are what one wishes for much more than details, and I candidly confess that my first impression of the Escurial was that of great disappointment. It looked like a huge hospital, built at the extremity of a stony desert, and under the shelter of some jagged hills, devoid of the dignity of mountains. But then, when I looked upon it, I was cold, and tired, and ill, and moreover seriously uneasy in mind — Marietta and Henry Anson had made such decided advances in the way of intimacy since Saturday. Marietta is unquestionably prejudiced. She never thoroughly appreciated Mr. Neville, and the visit to the Museo seems to have given her quite a dislike to him. Then she is unguarded and says just what she thinks and feels, and does just what she happens to fancy; and so, as she evidently prefers a young companion, with whom she is free, to an older one who puts rather a restraint upon her, she has (often unconsciously) shown Henry Anson that she would rather be with him, and the effect is very evident. On that Monday morning when we went to the Escurial, Mr. Anson took it as a matter of course that Marietta was to be under his care — to walk with him, to sit by him, to study the guide-book with him — in short, to be his own property; and I confess

I was rather vexed with her for not throwing him back more. I cannot say she encouraged him, but her wish to escape from Mr. Neville made her kinder to him than I thought at all wise; and I was pondering seriously in my own mind how I could possibly give her a hint, when we stopped at the village, and gained our first view of 'El Escorial.' So strange one's unexpected associations are! How little I ever thought that Henry Anson and the Escurial would ever be intimately connected in my mind! But so it was to be. We went into the Fonda and ordered breakfast, and whilst it was preparing determined to have our first view of the palace. Mr. Neville ordered everything, and Henry Anson did nothing but try to keep up a bantering conversation with Marietta. I was very cross, and I do not think Mr. Neville was much better. By this time I think Marietta had become aware of the attentions paid her, and, to do her justice, I am sure she tried then to escape them. But if she left Mr. Anson, she was almost necessarily thrown upon Mr. Neville, whom she evidently did not like; and I was ungracious enough to wish our two gentlemen away, and very glad when the presence of a guide brought us all together, and prevented *tête-à-têtes*. A hideous building certainly is the Escurial on the exterior, and, though the gridiron legend is interesting, it is not very easy to make out the form. Then the place has a deserted, grass-grown look; the large courtyards are so silent, the great gateways so cold and white, which is quite different from being grim and grey. There is no poetry in white. The Escurial, in-

deed, is perfectly unpoetical, except from its situation. That really is grand, just under the Guadarrama range, and overlooking the desert plain of thirty miles stretching away to Madrid. But we entered at the back, and saw nothing at first but the paved courts. It was not until we went into the church that I felt what the grandeur of the place actually was. Nothing, except St. Peter's, ever impressed me so much, and the two are not in the least to be compared. St. Peter's is overpowering from its vastness, but the colouring is light and brilliant, and the effect of its size increases by study. The Church of the Escurial is perfectly simple, but unutterably solemn. Its pervading tone is sombre. The enormous granite piers, and jasper columns, and dark marble walls, only lightened by massive gilding, are taken in at one view. There is nothing to distract the eye, and one's first feeling is that of breathless awe. It is emphatically a royal church. Ferdinand VII.'s polished marble pulpits inlaid with gold medaillons are, perhaps, a little too modern and gaudy; but the material harmonises with the rest of the building, and so one is less inclined to criticise. I walked apart by myself — so, in fact, did we all. Just at that moment, the solemnity of the religious tone was especially needed, and I suspect we were all thankful to forget ourselves. From the church we went down to the crypt. Porphyry and jasper line the walls, both of the staircases descending into the great octagon vault, and of the vault itself. In the sides of the vault are niches containing the black marble sarcophagi in

which lie the bodies of the sovereigns of Spain, beginning from Charles V. Empty niches are waiting, to be filled by those who shall follow hereafter. Only kings and their mothers rest here; the remainder of the royal family are buried in an adjoining catacomb. There is no expression of Christian hope or Christian feeling. It might be a heathen burial-place; perhaps that made it the more awful. The one idea which forced itself on my mind was the strange reality, the enduringness of the past. Within the marble sarcophagi there lay actually the body of the mighty Charles V. It was almost as if he had come to life, and stood before me — so different was the sense of his actual existence which I then had from that which I had ever entertained before!

We none of us (except the guide) uttered a word whilst we were in the crypt. When we came out, Mr. Neville said quietly, "I think we shall do well to go back now, and see the rest of the palace after breakfast;" and he strode away by himself, and then returned, as if ashamed of his forgetfulness. Young Anson talked to the guide. Marietta shrank away from him, drew close to me, and said, "There are some sights which are better than sermons," and she would not move away from me again.

But we recovered ourselves after breakfast — all except Mr. Neville. The spirit of the gloomy palace seemed to have taken possession of him. He would not talk or admire, or even criticise, when we went again to the palace to see the royal apartments. They are

very small, remarkable chiefly for the quiet refined taste shown in the fitting-up of the rooms, especially in the assortment of colours. There is a great deal of inlaid wood and arabesque painting in them, and the rich silk hangings are superb; but the tone of the whole is singularly simple. I thought this would just have pleased Mr. Neville, but he was very contradictory, and his only remark was that the pictures were execrable. He did rouse himself a little when we were told that we were to see Philip II.'s apartments, and he walked on first with the guide, and asked a good many questions; but this was rather provoking, because it did not give us an opportunity of putting in a word. However, Philip's rooms were so small that we could not help hearing what was said. The reception-room could scarcely have held thirty people, and within was a little chamber quite dark; and beyond that Philip's bedroom, also excessively small. A tiny closet adjoins the bedroom; it opens into the church. Here Philip heard Mass, and here he was brought to die. To be standing there, contrasting the past with the present, made one tremble. History ceases to be history, and becomes biography, when one is brought in this way almost face to face with its prime movers; and biography at once carries one's thoughts beyond this world. We went out of the oratory (if it may be so called) into the cabinet, where Philip was accustomed to work and weave the web of European politics. The very chair in which he sat is still kept there, with the desk at which he wrote, the stool on which he rested his foot — and which was

also, I believe, the stool used by Charles V. in the monastery of Yuste. I longed to turn everyone out of the room, and stay there by myself, and think! My companions were not congenial. Henry Anson professes to hate history, and care only for science; Mr. Neville, though a first-rate historian, was too cross to exhibit or, I suspect, to feel sympathy with anything, living or dead; and Marietta bemoans, as she continually does, her great ignorance, the result of a careless, irregular education. By living abroad, she has gained a thorough mastery of one or two foreign languages, and is in possession of the key to unlock the cabinet of knowledge; but of the contents of the cabinet she knows little or nothing. Travelling with her has made me much more satisfied with the instruction I have been able to give my own children. My darling Cecil would have entered into all that we have been seeing in Spain with delight, she was so very fond of history! But what is there to regret? What do we know which she does not know, and what does she not know which to us is hidden in awful mystery? And only a month ago she was one of us! But I must not think of that.

The history of the rest of our day must be condensed. We wandered through the gardens, and wished it had been summer. They are grand, formal, uninteresting to an English eye — laid out in broad terraces and straight walks, amongst pasturés and fountains: only the splendid dreariness of the desert stretching beyond, rich in its yellow stony hue, and its far-distant

purple haze, redeem them from ugliness. Again Henry Anson and Marietta were together, I really can scarcely tell how, except that Mr. Neville kept aloof, and that I could not let him walk alone. As we were leaving the palace, on our way back to the railway-station, he said to me, gravely, "Are you prepared for the consequences of this day, Mrs. Anstruther?"

I understood him directly, and answered: "The question is, Is Lady Anson prepared?"

"I am afraid not," he replied; "at least so she gave me to understand before we left England, but I thought then that there was no fear."

"Indeed! But Henry Anson's admiration had been the talk of Dernham for months?"

"But the feeling was not returned then; it is quite evident now," and Mr. Neville laughed.

I cannot say how I disliked the laugh — it was so extremely cold and hard.

"Really," I replied, "I don't see what is to be done; neither you nor I can interfere. After all, though I am Marietta's friend and *chaperone*, I am not her mother. I have no actual control over her — I can but advise her. And what is there to give advice about? She does and says nothing which anyone can find fault with."

"Nothing! Oh no! Miss Randolph always takes care to be perfectly unexceptionable."

"But what do you mean?" I said. "You cannot possibly believe that Marietta is really encouraging young Anson wrongly?"

"Oh no! why should it be wrong? I don't understand myself why Lady Anson should object to her as she does."

His tone irritated me beyond expression; I began to wonder that I had ever been able to endure him.

"I wish Henry Anson would go back to England!" I exclaimed.

"Do you, indeed?" Mr. Neville spoke eagerly, but instantly afterwards added, "I doubt if that would mend matters."

"I do wish it heartily," I repeated; "I wish he could go to-morrow. I would leave Madrid myself willingly if I could arrange it. Anything to separate them!"

"I see," he said, "you are quite alive to the danger."

"I have been made so to-day," I replied. "I thought before that Marietta did not in the least care for him."

"And you don't think so now?"

"I think she is open to impression from his attentions; I don't say more."

Mr. Neville was silent. We had reached the station, and were waiting for the train to come up. Pretending to be afraid of the cold, I made Marietta sit down in the waiting-room. There was no opportunity for any further conversation till we reached Madrid.

It was long after the hour for the *table d'hôte*, but we had arranged, before we started, to dine all together in an outer saloon. I repented of this now as an imprudence, and suggested to Marietta that, as we were

both very tired, and my cold was bad, she and I should have something in our own room. But this was not practicable: we had given our orders, and we were compelled to abide by them. Young Anson was in high spirits; he jarred upon me. I was more silent than I ought to have been, and Marietta kept up the conversation, and jarred upon me more. As for Mr. Neville, he neither ate nor talked, and, as an excuse for himself, declared he had a bad headache.

We went to our own rooms immediately after supper. I could bear my annoyance no longer, and when Marietta took a chair, and sat down by the fire, I most incautiously began:

"Marietta, my child, you must not be angry with me, but really you must learn to be a little more prudent."

If a thunderbolt had fallen at her feet, she could not have looked more scared.

"What? — how? Dear Mrs. Anstruther, what can you mean?"

"Henry Anson really will think that you care for him, if you give him so much encouragement," I said.

"I! I don't comprehend. What have I done?"

"Nothing, except talk; but, you will understand, I should not like observations to be made."

The colour rose to her cheek, and she replied: "It is Mr. Neville's doing. You need not tell me that. *You* would never have suspected me."

"There is no suspicion, my love," I said; "it is a plain matter of fact. If you are too free ——"

She caught up my words — "Too free! Did Mr. Neville say I was too free? He is cruel — cruel!" And she hid her face with her hands, and murmured again, "Cruel!"

"My dear," I said, "this is treating the matter absurdly. I can never venture to give you a caution if you take my words and exaggerate them in this way. Mr. Neville did not say you were too free — neither did I. All that we both of us say is that, if you laugh and talk with Henry Anson in that way ——" (I hesitated, for I was quite sure that whatever I said would be misinterpreted). "I mean," I continued, "that, knowing (as you must know) that he has rather a predilection for you, it would be safe, unless you return the feeling — and even then, it would be better, considering, as Mr. Neville has told me, that Lady Anson" — (what could I say?) — "dislikes, objects ——" I came to a complete standstill, and wished, more earnestly than I can say, that I had never introduced the subject.

Italian pride came to Marietta's assistance at the moment, as English awkwardness came to my discomfiture. She stood up and said: "I quite understand. You are Mr. Neville's interpreter; I am greatly obliged to him. Pray tell him so — he need not be in the least uneasy — I will be more guarded for the future." Then there was a pause, and she rushed away to the inner room. I did not go near her for nearly an hour.

When, at last, I did venture to do so, I found her sitting at the side of her bed, not yet undressed, and looking very mournful. I went up to her and kissed her tenderly. She threw her arms round me, and said: "You don't think so of me, — you won't agree with him?"

"Darling!" I replied, "you do Mr. Neville great injustice; but we won't talk any more about him to-night."

"I never wish to hear his name again," she exclaimed. "But I should like him to know, — yes, I wish with all my heart I could tell him ——". She stopped suddenly, and burst into tears.

I could but soothe her, urge her to go to bed, and assure her that no one had said anything or thought anything which could in the least give her real cause for annoyance. She listened, but I did not see that I had made any impression upon her; and at length, really worn out, I was obliged to leave her.

So ended our Escurial day.

This morning [Tuesday], very early, I received a note from Mr. Neville, saying that his plans were finally decided. Mr. Anson would start in the evening for England, with the courier Mariana. His object in writing so early was to beg me to make use of the courier, on this last day, if I had any commissions to execute, or if there was anything I wished particularly to see. Mr. Anson would, of course, be delighted to take back anything to England which we might wish to send. A most sudden resolution — but I am

not surprised. Two or three more days here would bring matters to a climax with young Anson, and, whatever the result might be, it would be most awkward. I have seen, from the first, that Mr. Neville did not wish to carry him to the South, though he had no fair excuse for not doing so. To have the care of one young man whilst going in search of another would no doubt be a burden. Henry Anson's departure would cut the Gordian knot of our difficulties, and I am greatly relieved. Marietta made no remark when I told her what had been determined on; she only asked if she might breakfast upstairs, which, though rather an awkward arrangement, was managed for her. I am writing this after breakfast, and whilst waiting for Mr. Neville, who is coming to see me, and talk over plans for the day. He does not start till eight o'clock this evening. The courier has been sent to the post for letters. Up to this time I have had only a few lines from Ina, saying that she was well and happy, and that she had had a short note from nurse: all well at home. I fully expect to hear from Mrs. Bradshaw today, for she has only written once since she heard of our sorrow, and then only a few loving words. Here comes the courier, and — most thankful am I — with a letter in his hand: —

"Dernham, December 12th.

"My dear Friend, — I never in my life began a letter in a more unsatisfactory mood. I have but a very remote idea that this will reach you, and I cannot

therefore bring myself to say anything upon the subject nearest your heart. I will only send you my truest love, and tell you that I have thought and do think of you continually. You will understand the sympathy which cannot be expressed. And now we will turn to other matters, for if my scrawl should ever reach Madrid, it will infallibly die a natural death in the post-office — (Is there such a place in Madrid?) — and there be buried. Under this belief, I shall make it as short as possible. I set too high a value upon my time, and my epistolary powers, to waste them upon the 'desert air' (by-the-bye, how much obliged one ought to be to Gray for that line! It always comes to one's aid in a difficulty); and if people will go to out-of-the-way countries, they must expect to be treated as out-of-the-way themselves. Still, being, as I hope, a Christian, I feel bound to tell you that your children are quite well, and quite happy. Esther has not caught a fever, Hugh has not broken his leg, and Agnes has not yet retired into a nunnery. I have no doubt you have had visions of all these misfortunes haunting you for the last month. Now you may make your mind easy. Also you will be glad to know that the world goes round still, and that Mr. L'Estrange has not turned me out of the Sunday-school, though he has had great temptation to do so; for I have introduced a little book of stories, which I read to the children on a Sunday afternoon, as soon as I begin to hear little snores.

"Lady Anson is expecting her darling home, and

there are to be great rejoicings on the occasion; and Miss Lydia Harcourt has sent to Paris for a dress for the ball which is to celebrate the heir's return. Rumour says that Mrs. Randolph is going to be married to a German prince, so I suspect your Spanish journey will prove but a wild-goose chase. I shall not exult over you if it should, but you must allow me to have the gratification of saying to you once, "I thought so." Mr. Neville's young cousin, Frank, came here yesterday with your Charlie. Two boys are better than one, so I begged his friends to spare him for the Christmas holidays. He is a fine fellow, twice Charlie's size, and very manly; all the better for your boy, who imitates him in everything. My son has taken them out shooting to-day. I shall leave my letter open to assure you that they have returned safe. Frank Neville thinks his cousin (our Mr. Neville) a hero, which is more than I do. He is an unquestionable don, a variety of the human race with which I confess I have no sympathy. But he is doing a good deed now, so Frank tells me — searching after a black sheep, a certain John Penrhyn, a relation or connexion of yours, so far as I can make out. Why do we have relations, and why are they always black? I never yet met with anyone who did not say that he or she could have got on much better in the world if they had had no relations. But this is wandering to abstruse questions, and I don't mean to benefit the Spanish officials who may open my letter by my ideas upon relationship. I forgot — they don't speak (and I suppose don't read) English — a

great loss to them, and causing immense confusion in the human mind generally. Don't you always believe (I do) that St. Paul wrote his Epistles — as somebody said — in good plain English? The idea is innate, instinctive — and innate ideas must be true. Good-bye, my dear friend. I never wrote a more stupid letter in all my life. I have come to the conclusion that the pleasure of letter-writing varies in an inverse ratio to the distance between the correspondents. Really to enjoy it, one ought to send daily notes to one's opposite neighbour. Now that you are in Spain, I have no wish to write to you, except to assure you that I love and think of you, and that you know without being told. This is all surface, as I said at the beginning. I don't venture upon anything else. When I look in your face, I shall know whether to speak or to be silent. Now I feel that silence is best, for at least it cannot jar. Much love to Marietta.

"Yours, with true affection,

"C. BRADSHAW."

"P.S. The little ones shall put in a small word of their own, and so shall Charlie, who has just come in, in high glee at having aimed at two birds, and missed both."

Yes, that is an unsatisfactory letter; but Mrs. Bradshaw could hardly be expected to understand how I yearn for little details about my pets. I ought to have written to Drayton, if I wished for a nursery report of them. But they are well, and with that I must be

satisfied — more than satisfied — thankful. The rumour about Mrs. Randolph and the German prince is, of course, founded on the intimacy with Baron von Bronnen. It must have been very marked to have reached England. I grieve for the evil report of John Penrhyn; it is worse than anything I have ever heard Mr. Neville say of him. The world seems very blank now that I have "eaten my pudding," and found how little there was of it, or in it. And I cannot expect to hear again for the next fortnight, for I have been quite unable to give our address. How earnestly I wish I was going back to England with Henry Anson! But another note from Mrs. Randolph's maid says that it is hoped we shall be at Valencia on Friday.

CHAPTER XIII.

Aranjuez, Fonda de las Cuatro Naciones: December 18. — Events have crowded on us. After the letter on Tuesday we went out sightseeing — Marietta very unwillingly, her pride had been so deeply wounded; but she was resolved not to show it. Mr. Neville went with us. Henry Anson was engaged all the morning in packing. We went to the Palace and the Armoury, and paid a last visit to the Museo; came back and found that, owing to some blunder of the courier, Mr. Anson could not start till the next day. Marietta professed to have a headache and kept to her room, and we made interest with the waiter to let us dine upstairs. Marietta shut herself up from me completely: I could not break down the barrier, though I tried very hard. We went to bed early. The next morning we were obliged to go downstairs to breakfast, and the first thing I heard was that still there would be a delay in young Anson's movements. I could not make out the cause, but I fancy it had something to do with the *blanchisseuse*. When Mr. Neville came in and heard of the new difficulty, I never saw a countenance express more thorough annoyance. It was so visible as to be absolutely rude, and Marietta too would not utter a word of satisfaction to

young Anson. For myself, I scarcely knew what I said. It was intensely awkward. The poor young man looked quite discomfited. After breakfast, Mr. Neville followed me upstairs, and asked if it would be possible to have a few minutes' private conversation with me. Marietta was in the inner room. Mr. Neville stood by the window, not looking at me — he was absolutely nervous, and so pale! But he began abruptly —

"Had I quite made up my mind that it would be unwise to allow Miss Randolph and Henry Anson to be any longer together?"

"Quite," I replied.

He paused for several seconds. Then he said, abruptly, "I start myself to-night for Cordova."

"To-night?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, to-night. I have had a letter which makes it imperative upon me to go. I must leave you here under Henry Anson's protection."

"Yes," I said, "but he goes to-morrow."

Mr. Neville smiled. "You really think he intends it?"

"Yes, certainly; you have settled it for him."

"I beg your pardon; it was his own proposal to go back to England."

"But how? Why?"

"I thought it my duty to put before him his mother's feelings, and to urge that he should at least wait before he said anything to Miss Randolph. He decided then that he would return home immediately."

"And now the attraction is too strong for him. Yes, I see. But what can be done?"

"May I suggest? It may seem an impertinence."

"Pray," I exclaimed, "suggest — advise — say what you will. I shall only be too grateful. If I could set off for Valencia at once, I would do it — anything to separate them."

"What do say to Aranjuez?" he replied. "It is a place to be seen, and to-morrow you might go to Toledo. That would pass the time till Saturday."

"But it is so late to make arrangements," I said.

"The train which I must go by would take you to Aranjuez. We should start together at eight this evening. But your cold is so bad, it seems cruel to suggest it."

"The cruelty," I said, "would be in leaving me here with these two young people, and no one to help me. If I can once get Marietta away, her thoughts will be diverted. I don't believe the wound is deep, though I would never answer for the effects of propinquity. As for him, 'Men have died, and worms have eaten them, but not for love.'"

"He is an excellent young fellow," said Mr. Neville, "open-hearted and true, though not very wise; but not fitted for her — not worthy of her. It would be throwing her away, except for the connexion, and she would never think of that."

Silence again.

"Then it is decided?" I said.

"Decided, if you really feel it to be right. But

I don't want to hurry you, and you have not spoken to Miss Randolph."

"I shall not give her the choice, and she will be grateful to me. She is not in a mood to decide anything for herself. We go this afternoon to the *Sala del Congreso?*"

"Yes; I have tickets for it."

And he took his leave. He is not a don; Mrs. Bradshaw does him great injustice there. But he is morbidly conscientious, and as fidgety about young Anson as if he had given a solemn pledge that he should never marry Marietta.

I went to Marietta, told her what I had settled, found her quite willing to go, and spent the morning preparing for departure. To the *Sala del Congreso* we went in the afternoon. The deputies were not sitting, because of a discussion going on in the Upper House about the Mexican war. So far as I can understand, there are certain occasions on which the Commons (as we should call them) are expected to leave their own business, and go to listen humbly to what the superior assembly (the nobles) have to say. We looked into the *Sala*, a handsome circular room, with crimson furniture and frescoed walls; also into the committee-rooms, extremely comfortable, sociable apartments. Then we rushed off to the Upper House. There was a great difficulty about admitting us. We were told there would be no room, as the deputies were filling the gallery. I should have turned back, for I don't understand pressing and bribing. Mr. Neville was

bent on entering, but no one would listen. Just then a tall large woman pushed by me. She spoke Spanish fluently, represented herself as English, as especially eager to hear the debate. The officials relented. She turned round to speak to a gentleman behind her, and I recognised Lady Chase. The officials beckoned to them to go forward, and made a sign to us to follow. Mr. Neville happened to be first, and he went on; I could not stop him. The next minute we found ourselves at the door of the deputies' gallery, and were immediately admitted. I whispered to Marietta, "Don't recognise anyone," and we seated ourselves as far as possible from our unwelcome neighbour. If Lady Chase knew us, she certainly was as unwilling to own us as we were to own her. I thought the Peers' House scarcely as handsome as the Commons'. The ministers sat on benches lined with green velvet, and having a crown worked in gold upon the back. I was glad to be able to distinguish O'Donnell — a calm, shrewd-looking, middle-aged man, very English in appearance. The members struck me as having a refined gentlemanlike air. I could just follow the debate sufficiently to know that the speaker was praising England. But we could not stay long, for more deputies were entering the gallery, and there was not room for us.

We walked home; and as I was anxious to say a few words in private to Mr. Neville about Lady Chase, we went on in front. I really thought that, after last night's caution, Marietta's manner would be quite suf-

ficient to put a restraint upon Henry Anson; in fact, she had scarcely spoken to him all day, and this, added to the knowledge that we were to separate that evening, had made the poor young man look quite unhappy. Mr. Neville and I turned into a shop in the Puerta del Sol, to buy some photographs, or, at least, to see if we could find any. We believed that Marietta and Henry Anson were close behind us, and it was not till we had made our purchases that we discovered they were not. I was vexed and annoyed, and blamed myself, but I really did not think it a matter of much consequence till I reached the hotel and went up-stairs. Marietta was there finishing her packing. We were to dine at the *table d'hôte*, and start for Aranjuez at eight o'clock. I saw directly I looked at her that something had happened; she was so flushed, nervous, and excited; yet she did not say a word to me, except to ask me to help her in some trifling way, but went on working at the packing, as if it was the one object of her life.

The bell rang for the *table d'hôte*. Marietta started, and I felt sure she was going to say that she would not go down; but she recovered herself directly, and followed me. Her manner to young Anson was quite changed; instead of being cold and proud, she made an effort to be kind, and put him at his ease: but it would not succeed. He looked absolutely wretched. At last he asked if we had any message for Pau. He thought it possible he might go there before he returned home. He had never seen the place; and

Colonel and Mrs. Strangways were old friends of his mother's. Mr. Neville turned upon him sharply.

"Why, Anson, are you mad? You have written to your father to mention the very day you are to be in England; and he won't stand change."

"He must stand it," was the answer. "I don't know when I shall be at home."

It was just at the close of dinner, and Henry Anson had spoken so decidedly and almost angrily that several persons, strangers, turned to listen. To get rid of the awkwardness, I hurried Marietta away, with the excuse that we must prepare for our night journey. Directly we were alone, I asked if she could tell the cause of this sudden move.

All her reply was, "Dear Mrs. Anstruther, please ask him yourself:" and the tone in which she spoke so threw me back that I was pained, and showed it. Anything more sweet and loving than she was then, it would be impossible to imagine, but I could get nothing more from her. Time was passing, and the carriage would soon be ready to take us to the station. Mr. Neville, who was to accompany us as far as Aranjuez and there leave us, came up-stairs to see if we were ready and wanted assistance. Henry Anson remained below. It was a bright moonlight night, intensely cold. We needed all our shawls and railway wrappers to keep us warm, and I told Mr. Neville that I did not envy him. He was to go by railway to Santa Cruz, and there to meet the Diligence which would convey him by a journey of thirty hours to Cordova.

"No," he said, he was not to be envied; and when I looked at him I felt that his words were very true. Young Anson might be wretched, but Mr. Neville looked much more so. It was a hurried and most unsatisfactory departure. Henry Anson was standing in the midst of waiters and porters when we said good-bye to him. I could only give him a cordial shake of the hand, and hope that he would have a comfortable journey with the courier, and that we should meet again soon at Dernham.

He thanked me, and hoped the same; but there was no heartiness in the tone.

Marietta's farewell was shorter, but I doubt if it was as cold. Her hand rested in his, and she did not attempt to withdraw it. I think Mr. Neville noticed this, for he watched them narrowly, and when he handed Marietta into the fly and spoke to her about her luggage, it was almost as if he was addressing a naughty child.

We travelled together for an hour. Mr. Neville made acquaintance with an English gentleman, and talked of Spain and its prospects; the fertility of the land, which, when irrigated, will produce, it is said, four crops a year; — the success of the Alicante railway, which pays eleven per cent. I envied him for being able so to distract his thoughts; though my cold was so bad that I was for that reason thankful to be quiet. The hour was very short: latterly I fell asleep, and I was actually dreaming of England when the

train stopped at the Aranjuez station. A more glorious night I never saw. Such a moon, and such a clear sky! But oh! the cold! I dreaded being turned out into the open air; and my heart sank at the thought of parting from Mr. Neville. It made me feel so unprotected. For the moment I wished heartily that we had remained at Madrid. We had but a very few moments for farewell. Mr. Neville got out of the carriage with us to give us some assistance, but he was ordered in again directly, as we were saying good-bye. I asked him when we might meet again. "He did not know, perhaps never. He was going back to England, but he should not remain there. He thought he should try the Indian Bar." It was the first time I had ever heard him suggest the possibility. There was a half-uttered exclamation from some one close to me. I looked round. It must have been Marietta, for no one else was near; but she had turned deliberately away to speak to a porter, and before I could recall her attention the train moved on.

Ten minutes' walk to the hotel! That was the information we received from the little guide who undertook to convey us thither. A strange ghastly and ghostly walk it was in the moonlight; — along a pathway leading us by the stately buildings of the palace, the centre and side-wings of which fronted the gardens, all cut and squared, and railed in with high iron-work, and looking colder than the cold moon. Where we were going we could not see. The palace buildings cast dark shadows around us; but something there was

in the distance, it might be trees, it might be a house, but I could perceive no lights.

We had miscalculated our plan. The Cuatro Naciones might be a very pleasant abode in summer — well-furnished, because requiring scarcely any furniture; well-attended and appointed, because the palace would ensure a certainty of guests; but in the depth of winter, with the court at Madrid, what could possibly bring visitors there? I am sure this must have been the mental query of the landlord when we entered the cold stone passage of the half-dismantled hotel and asked for rooms.

"The whole house was at our disposal. There was but one person there besides ourselves — an English gentleman. We could have coffee, an omelette, eggs; but fire? — no, there was not a room with a fire-place. But there was a *sala* in which a brazier of charcoal was burning; we might have our supper there; it would be very comfortable; we could sit round it and warm our feet; and we could not surely wish for anything more." And forthwith we were ushered along another stone passage, our footsteps echoing through the silent house, and were introduced into the said *sala*. And we did crouch over the charcoal, and try to think it was warm, and we did have our supper in the *sala*, and endeavoured to persuade ourselves that we were not very uncomfortable. But it would not do. We were both too tired and disconsolate to hide our misery, and by mutual consent we went to bed simply to get warm. Perhaps it was a good thing

that our bodily discomforts distracted our attention from mental worries. I felt ashamed of myself for feeling depressed and timid at being again without a gentleman, and I suspect Marietta sympathised with me, though she would not own it. When I asked her if she did not wish we could have kept Mr. Neville with us to take care of us, her instant reply was, "We shall do much better without him. He would have been quite in the way to-night." And so he would, but still I wished for him. Henry Anson's name was not mentioned by either of us, and I fell asleep pondering upon the experience of the day, and the meaning of that last clasp of the hand which I had remarked as we left the Peninsulares.

This morning (Thursday) we were up at a quarter to seven, breakfasted soon after eight, and went out to see the palace. We were told by the porter that there was no admittance, but we soon found that the refusal was merely a matter of form. The man was really only too glad to take us over it, and show us the grand staircase, and the private apartments of the Queen and her husband (I never can think of him as King). There was a good deal to interest one, because of the royal associations, but in itself the palace is nothing. I observed the same kind of quiet taste in colour as at the Escurial. The most singular of the Queen's apartments was one room, the walls of which were covered with porcelain from a porcelain manufactory in Madrid. The King's apartments were quite plain. One room was entirely ornamented with little rice-paper pictures,

Chinese. There was a piano in it (the King is very fond of music), with some very common chairs, but little furniture besides. The gardens, no doubt, are charming in summer. Anything green in the midst of the great Madrid desert must be doubly delightful. In winter they are for the most part simply formal and uninteresting; long walks and avenues by the side of straight narrow canals, with fountains and statues at intervals. Beyond, there is something more like a natural wood, where trees and grass are allowed to grow as they will; but Aranjuez is entirely a made place, and if it were in any other situation, would be thought nothing of. I liked seeing it though, and was especially glad to be able to do so, because it interested Marietta. She seemed more herself again, the restraint of the last few days being over; and yet she was not quite herself, because she shut herself up from me, and that she never did before.

We were to be at the railway station by ten o'clock, for we had arranged to go over to Toledo for the day; so after seeing the palace, we hurried back to the hotel to collect our things together. I was standing in the entrance waiting for a porter to take some of the *petites bagages* to the railway station, as we intended to walk, when my eye fell upon the direction of a small English portmanteau which had been placed near my carpet-bag. "John Penrhyn, Fonda de Paris, Valencia." I drew Marietta's attention to it. "It can be no one else," I said; "and Mr. Neville is gone in the wrong direction. What a blunder!"

"We are not sure," said Marietta. "There may be more than one John Penrhyn in the world."

"But scarcely in Spain. I suppose we can do nothing. Yet I wish I could see Mr. Penrhyn. He must be the one English gentleman here. It is immensely unfortunate."

"*Es muy tarde*, Señora," interrupted the porter, and catching up the carpet-bags, he walked off with them, and we were obliged to follow.

I tried to ask something about the portmanteau and its owner, but my Spanish was deficient; and though I think I made my question understood, I could only gather a half intelligible reply. I believe we were told that the gentleman's train would not start till after ours. Anyhow, we did not see an Englishman at the station. So whether John Penrhyn was really John Penrhyn, and what was his object in going to Valencia, remains still a mystery. I have thought since that it was quite as well we did not meet, for Mr. Neville might not wish him to know that he was in Spain, and we could scarcely have avoided mentioning the fact.

But we are destined to be haunted by people whom it is awkward to meet. We had one companion at first in our carriage, a most respectable Spanish gentleman, who ensconced himself in a corner in complete English fashion, said nothing, and left Marietta and myself to enjoy without interruption the pretty neighbourhood of Aranjuez — pretty, that is, by contrast with utter barrenness, and pretty prospectively; for one had to

imagine leaves on the trees, and flowers on the banks. Still it was refreshing to see something which might by possibility be some day green. And then it was warm; the sun was really powerful, and we began to recognise that the icy winds of Madrid were actually things of the past. I daresay I enjoyed it all the more because I have been so wretched lately with my very bad cold, and to-day, for the first time, I felt that it was departing.

But quietness was not to be ours. At a small station, I forget the name, a little way from Aranjuez, and just where the green oasis ceased, a lady and two gentlemen, or rather a woman and two men, entered the carriage; — Lady Chase, Baron von Bronnen, and another man of the same stamp. Marietta glanced at me, and her colour went and came very quickly. I took out a book and began to read. Marietta did the same. Our new companions looked at us — whispered — looked again. I saw them, although I was pretending to read. Lady Chase was sitting on the same side with Marietta, and the Spanish gentleman was between them. I was opposite to Marietta. Presently Lady Chase bent forward and said to Marietta, "Surely I cannot be mistaken;" and she held out her hand.

Marietta drew back, made the stiffest of bows, and continued reading.

The repulse was so evident, that the Spaniard looked round in amazement. Lady Chase laughed a bold, most disagreeable laugh, and turning to her friends, spoke to them in French; but what she said I did not

hear, and, in fact, I did not take the trouble to listen. How uncomfortable I felt I really cannot say: I thought nothing of the scenery, or where we were going, or what we were to see; all I cared for was to be free from this intolerable woman. And really she made herself intolerable, worse a great deal than I could have imagined. The whole party indeed were odious. They laughed and talked, and bringing out a luncheon basket, ate and drank in such a way that I felt actually ashamed that the stately Spaniard should see what English people can be. When at length we stopped at the station at Toledo, they got out first and walked on, and the Spaniard, turning to me, said quietly, "*no es buena*," to which I could only assent, with great inward thankfulness that the party had left us. A little omnibus was in waiting, and we and several other persons, amongst them our Spanish friend, crowded into it, and crossed the Tagus by the Puente de Alcantara, a bridge that has an old Moorish tower at the end, flanked by a double row of city walls, over which the tall houses look down, keeping watch upon all intruders into the city. We rattled through the narrow paved streets, with much more noise than speed; for Toledo is built on a rocky hill, and progress is slow. Our landlord at Aranjuez had given us the name of a guide, who, he said, would take us over the town, and show us all that was to be seen, in the shortest time and the best way; but, to our extreme annoyance, when we were deposited at the Fonda, and asked for the guide whom we were told we should find there, we

were informed that an English party had just engaged him. Most trying it was, first, because we were so ignorant how to proceed, and next, because it proved that Lady Chase and her friends were on the same sight-seeing expedition as ourselves, and we might very probably meet them again. Our Spanish friend most good-naturedly came forward to our assistance (and I would note here, that we have always hitherto found Spaniards remarkably courteous and helpful): he offered to find us another guide, and did so immediately; and as we were told that there would be no hope of having anything to eat till the hour for the *mesa redonda*, we set off on our tour of inspection: first, of course, to the cathedral — more Moorish than Burgos, and in that respect more interesting; very grand with its double aisles and heavy piers, rich with mouldings and foliage, but marred by the enclosed *Coro* in the heart of the central nave. There are rich chapels, a magnificent *retablo* of the marvellous carved work so peculiar to Spain, and, in fact, treasures of art and antiquity which one might spend days in admiring and understanding; but I marked them down in the guide-book, and have no time to add them to my journal. Neither can I do more than note our tour of the city, through wonderful little lanes, reminding us by their narrowness of the lanes of Venice; and with no houses of importance to be seen, though Toledo is by no means a poor place, being specially the resort of rich Jews. But the houses open into interior courts in the Eastern fashion, and only the backs of

them are to be seen from these so-called streets. It was grievous to hurry over everything as we did. There was neither poetry nor history in my mind; for it was out of the question to feel anything but anxiety as to what we should see next, and whether we should be able to see all; and we were obliged to take for granted everything which the guide said, only half understanding him, and having a misgiving all the time that the little we did comprehend was as likely as not to be untrue. One must live in a place, and walk about it leisurely by oneself, to get up any feeling about it. Then, too, I carry a weight at my heart; I cannot get rid of it: and again and again, in the midst of all this sight-seeing, I find my thoughts travelling back to Pau.

We went back to the Fonda after seeing the cathedral, and had some dinner, in a most rough and primitive fashion, and in a room crowded with low and dirty Spaniards. I daresay there may be much better Fondas in the town, but we were obliged to take the first which presented itself; and certainly my experience makes me thankful that we never attempted to sleep at Toledo. The most interesting part of the day was the walk after dinner, when we lionised the Casa de la Mesa, an old Moorish building with some beautiful specimens of the stucco work of the Alhambra kind. There was an old Jewish synagogue too, also Moorish — in fact Toledo is, I suspect, the most Moorish place we could have seen in the north of Spain, and for that reason alone I am extremely glad that

Marietta should see it. The one thing which really touched me during the whole day was the sight of the fetters taken off the Christian captives when Granada fell, and which were hung on the outside of the walls of the great Franciscan convent built by the "Reyes Catolicos," Ferdinand and Isabella, who meet one so constantly in Spain, that one is inclined to doubt sometimes whether the country ever had any other monarchs. The walk to this convent took us outside the town, and along the side of the rocky hill, overlooking what the guide-book calls the wild and melancholy Tagus. And such it certainly is, and Toledo on its rocky hills is to me one of the most wild and melancholy places, as regards situation, which I ever visited. But in the month of December one is no judge of scenery. Tradition says that a Moorish princess once had a country palace in the neighbourhood, and that the gardens were known as *la huerta*, or the orchard. I would on no account deny the fact, but as I looked down upon *la huerta* from the height on which stands the Alcazar, I could see nothing to lead me to believe in its charms. It was the last place we visited, that Alcazar. How far back it dates I do not pretend to say, but it was a fortress in the time of the Moors, and the Cid was its first Christian governor; and it was enlarged and inhabited by Ferdinand and Isabella, and Charles the Fifth, and finished by Philip the Second, and burnt by Napoleon, and so it is a complete compendium of Spanish history: and I was thoroughly interested as I walked through the forsaken *patio*, or court, which is

surrounded by a beautiful arcade, and looked up at the grand staircase and the remains of the splendid granite pillars, supporting an upper gallery. I might even have felt something like excitement, if I had not been interrupted in my meditations by the most unwelcome apparition of our travelling companions. We came upon them suddenly, as we were going up the great staircase to the gallery. I believe myself that they had been watching us from the gallery. Anyhow, they came down as we were going up, and stopped and compelled us to speak. Baron von Bronnen expressed extreme gratification at meeting us, and was especially delighted to recognise me. Lady Chase forced herself upon me, and "knew me perfectly well, though she had never had the pleasure of an introduction. How long had we been in Spain? Where were we going? How did we like the country?"

One might have thought we had been on the most intimate terms, and the Baron began to explain his movements, and why he had come to Spain instead of going to Switzerland. I really made no reply, and tried to move on, but was literally stopped and questioned again, in such a way that I could not help suspecting a motive. My spirit was roused then, and I said boldly, "You must excuse me, but our time is short;" and I turned round and went down the stairs, these people following me. They left the *patio* with us. Lady Chase came close up to Marietta, who was walking just behind me, and said, "You are going to your poor aunt, I know, to-morrow. I send my fond love

to her. I only wish it were possible for me to be with her. And would it be asking too great a favour? I have written a little note to her; would you take charge of it?" Marietta hesitated. I caught the last words, and without giving Marietta time to answer, I turned, and said, "Your note will go more safely by the post, Lady Chase. Marietta, we have no time to lose." And I hurried on, Marietta with me, and at last we were free of them. We were only just in time for the omnibus which was to take us to the station. I was quite glad to find our Spanish friend prepared to return with us. He seemed really a protection, for I was dreadfully afraid those people would come into the carriage again. Marietta was much distressed. "She felt haunted," she said: "wherever these people came, misery followed. But it was a comfort to think they were not to be at Valencia."

It was a comfort I could not enter into, for I thought then, and I think still, that Lady Chase had only one object in thus pursuing us — to find out our destination. She would not go to Mrs. Randolph to comfort her in her illness, but she would go to her to guard her from Marietta's influence; and I should not be in the least surprised to meet her at Valencia, if not when we arrive, at least immediately after us. It has been a most unpleasant ending to what would otherwise have been an enjoyable day. And it opens a prospect of perplexity for the future; for how can I leave Marietta in Spain with the chance of being brought into contact with such people? And yet, if Mrs.

Randolph should be — as I suspect she is — extremely ill, how can I take Marietta away? At such times as these I always try to remember how I used to look and wonder when I was going up the Rhine — seeing the river in one or two places shut in by cliffs, and not the slightest appearance of an opening; and yet, how, by degrees, the way disclosed itself, and we passed through easily. One's whole life is, in fact, nothing else than such a winding river.

December 29: *Valencia, Fonda del Cid.* — Adventures still! at least I don't know what else to call them. We left Aranjuez yesterday morning at ten, and had a tremendously long journey, and an unutterably dreary one — nothing but stone, and sand, and low hills, and miserable little villages of mud hovels for hours and hours. In fact, we did not see any scenery approaching to pretty the whole day; for though the country in the neighbourhood of Valencia is said to be beautiful, it was too dark to be visible. There was only one place at which we could have slept, Almansa, a great junction for the Alicante and Valencia railway, and even against this we had been warned. I feel I shall do injustice to Spain by my impressions of it. There must be great beauty in the south, but the middle and northern districts are really hopeless: — solitary and desert, without the grandeur of desolation. One feels that the only thing to be done is to rush away from and forget them. The train was more than an hour late, and we did not reach Valencia till eleven o'clock at night, far too late to think of making any

enquiries for Mrs. Randolph. As we were collecting our luggage, and arranging with the driver of a *tartana*, a most primitive kind of tilted cart, the only apology for a cab to be found in Valencia, I was accosted by a French Commissionnaire, a portly, consequential person, though very civil, who begged to know if I had not come from Aranjuez.

"Yes," I said; "I, and another lady; we had just arrived."

"Quite right. He had been told we should be there. The gentleman had desired him to say that there would be rooms for us at the Fonda de Paris."

"It must be a mistake," I said; "we knew no gentleman in Valencia; and we were going to The Cid."

The man persisted: it could not be a mistake; we had been at Toledo.

"Yes, no doubt, we had been at Toledo."

"And we were expected at Valencia, there could be no mistake."

"But it is a mistake," I said, a little hastily. "We know no one; and we are decidedly going to The Cid."

As I spoke, a vision of Lady Chase and her friends came before me. The message, I felt sure, must be intended for them. The Commissionnaire insisted he was right. I asserted more strongly he was wrong. He was vexed and discomfited, though still not at all uncivil. "Monsieur Duville," he said, "had sent him.

He was to look for two English ladies who had been at Toledo."

"Je ne connais pas Monsieur Duville," was my reply, "et nous allons au Cid."

I walked away, full of dignity and importance, feeling sure we were the victims of some conspiracy, and firmly resolved — as a lady should be — not to be taken in. Marietta, who had kept aloof during the dialogue with the Commissionnaire, said to me quietly as we were going out of the station, "It can't be Mr. Neville, can it?"

"Oh no!" I exclaimed, "impossible; unless —" I thought of John Penrhyn, and stopped. There did seem a kind of connection of ideas, a something which seemed to make it possible that Mr. Neville had changed his plans; but then he had actually started for Cordova, his luggage had been sent on beforehand from Madrid. No, it could not be; and I put aside the idea, and Marietta did not recur to it again. I confess I began a little to repent my extreme determination when we arrived at The Cid, for it was all but quite full. A prince of Barbary was expected, so we were told, and all the rooms were engaged except one at the back. At that late hour, however, any room was a welcome shelter, and we established ourselves without delay in an apartment which, after all, was not so very uncomfortable. The Spanish fashion of putting the beds into recesses, and leaving the outer part of the room to be used as a *salon*, is certainly very convenient when two people must be together.

And now we were actually at the end of our travels, and I began to think, and so did Marietta, and our thoughts were by no means pleasant. The poor child had been kept up during the journey by the novelty and the sense of self-sacrifice, and something like a spirit of adventure. But now that the cold reality was dawning upon her, made darker and more alarming by the possibility of Lady Chase's neighbourhood, her heart misgave her. What could she do? After all, would it be possible for her to be of any use to her aunt? If these people were to be with Mrs. Randolph, her influence would be certainly neutralised.

It was just what I had said to myself, and I at once proposed that if we found Lady Chase and her friend established here we should simply leave them and return home. But the strength of Marietta's will came out then. No; she felt herself pledged; she had promised her uncle to guard his wife; it was his dying request; and she had agreed to it, and her word was sacred. She had found her aunt, and she would guard her. It was sinful weakness to draw back and be afraid. She entreated me not to urge her, not to put the temptation before her; and then came such a burst of love, and tender recollections of Dernham, and her happiness there; of Ina, and Agnes, and the children, and our darling who had been taken from us: and the longing to remain with us, and the bitter, bitter pain at the prospect of parting; it went to my very heart. "Dear child," I began, "if I had thought it would have been such a trial ——"

But she interrupted me. "You would not have done differently, or I could not have consented. I must do the right. I could not live if I did not. It would wear my heart away to feel that I was not doing it. And I shall be brave to-morrow, but to-night I am so very tired." And then she kissed me, and smiled one of her own bewitching smiles, more really like a ray of sunshine than any other smile I ever saw; and almost instantaneously she was herself again, strong in self-control, and bent upon going through life with her face raised to confront every — even the sternest duty.

CHAPTER XIV.

Fonda de las Cuatro Naciones, Barcelona: December 27. — Not quite a week since I last wrote my journal. It seems months! I could not write before, it was impossible. Now I must try to gather up the thread of events as best I may. A year hence all that has happened will seem so unreal that I shall scarcely be able to persuade myself that I have really passed through it.

The night of our arrival at Valencia (the 19th) I went to bed rather anxious about the meeting with Mrs. Randolph on the morrow, but upon the whole more comfortable than I had been for some time; partly because we had actually reached the end of our journey, we had said good-bye to waiting and sight-seeing, but chiefly because I felt confidence in Marietta's good sense and judgment, and was sure that whatever she decided upon doing she would be able to carry out bravely.

The next morning our first thought was, of course, to find out Mrs. Randolph.

We took a Commissionnaire and walked to the Fonda de Paris. Valencia is not a very large place, and we were not tempted to try a *tartana* again. Anxious and uncomfortable as I was, I could not help

enjoying the novel look of the narrow streets, with their pretty balconies; and the peep into the *patios* of some of the best houses was most inviting, the arched colonnades, and wide staircases with carved balustrades, giving an idea of wealth and refinement which, since I left Madrid, I have quite forgotten to associate with Spain.

The Fonda de Paris looked less comfortable than The Cid. We inquired for Mrs. Randolph, and after a short discussion and consultation were ushered up a dark staircase into a stone corridor; there we were requested to wait. Marietta was so nervous that I was quite fidgetty about her, and there was no seat. We must have stood, and walked up and down, I really think, for nearly a quarter of an hour, and still no one came to us, and I began to think we were forgotten. At last the rustling of silk was heard in the distance, and, to my inexpressible disgust, Lady Chase appeared at the end of the corridor.

She came up to us with the most easy natural off-hand manner, quite as if it was a matter of course that she should be there. "She was quite surprised to see us. She had imagined we were *en route* to Granada, as we had declined taking her note. For herself, she had arrived yesterday, having travelled by night. It was always so much pleasanter, and it saved so much time; and after meeting us she had felt so uneasy about her poor friend that really she could not be happy away from her, and therefore she had started at once; and very fortunate it was that she had done so, for dear

Mrs. Randolph was so extremely ill; it was evident that Valencia did not agree with her, and she could get no good rooms. The Cid was full, and the Fonda de Paris very uncomfortable; in short, she was already thinking of moving to some other place, where the climate would be more bracing."

I broke into the middle of the history and said: "We are waiting till we can be told whether we can see Mrs. Randolph."

"Ah! yes, exactly; I came on purpose to give the message. Mrs. Randolph will be delighted to see her niece. Marietta, my dear ——"

The impertinence of the Christian name stung me, and I interrupted her again, — I could not help it, — "Miss Randolph, I believe, you mean."

"Yes, Miss Randolph — Marietta, it is all the same," and the woman laughed that odious laugh which makes me shudder whenever I hear it. "We are old friends, you know. I suspect, Marietta, you heard of me before you knew Mrs. Anstruther."

The poor child looked at me for protection; I would not let her answer. "Am I to understand," I said "that Mrs. Randolph will see us?"

"She will see Marietta."

"And not me?"

"Not to-day, I am afraid."

"Marietta," I said, "you can go, and I will wait for you. You may be quite sure," I added, seeing a momentary hesitation, "I will not leave the hotel without you."

"Not a coward, surely!" said Lady Chase, patting Marietta's shoulder. "What can there be to be afraid of?"

Marietta turned quietly to me and said: "I shall certainly not remain more than half an hour, unless I see great cause; in that case I will come back and tell you of it myself."

She followed Lady Chase along the corridor, and I continued to pace up and down, till seeing a waiter I begged to be accommodated with a chair. The man must have thought me a very suspicious individual, for he had a long consultation with another waiter before he could attend to my request. He then returned to me, and carelessly throwing open the door of a little ante-room, opening into the corridor, said I might sit down there. I sat down; the door was open, and I placed myself near it that I might see when Marietta came back. But I had not been in the room long before I heard a voice which I had learnt to know and dislike, that of Baron von Bronnen. He and some other person were doing what I had been doing, pacing the corridor. I drew back that I might not be noticed, and when they came so near that I could scarcely manage to hide myself, I retreated further into a dark empty recess, intended, I suppose, according to Spanish custom, for a bed.

I had scarcely done so when the two men entered the ante-room. They did not close the door, but only stood behind it as I had done. I fancied they wished to avoid some one, and I expected they would go out

again directly. Therefore I did not discover myself. Perhaps I ought to have done so, but I was so taken by surprise, and I had such a great aversion to the Baron, that I could not make up my mind at the moment, especially as, for the first few seconds, they were quite silent. But then the Baron spoke, and, to my surprise and regret, he was answered by John Penrhyn; I could not see the face of the latter, but I had no doubt whatever as to his voice. It is very sweet, with a singularly soft and refined intonation; scarcely, perhaps, manly enough, yet extremely winning. I gathered that he had arrived that morning by the railway from Alicante; but then a good deal was unintelligible, till I caught the words: "It is no use delaying, I have been a fool to stay so long."

"Good little boy!" said the Baron, ironically, and he went off into a long harangue in German, which I did not clearly hear, and if I had heard, I should probably not have understood, yet which kept me in an agony of impatience and annoyance.

John Penrhyn's German was not fluent; he relapsed again into English and became eager and excited. I made out that he was lamenting some ill-luck at cards.

"It will be right next time," said the Baron; "if you can only get off now. We shall meet at Barcelona, and I promise to give you another chance."

"It might be better to face it all," was the rejoinder. "It must come sooner or later."

"Now hearken," said the Baron: "I am older; I

know more, a good deal, in these matters than you. What Neville cares for isn't the fifty pounds, and what you care for isn't that. Keep things quiet, and go, and I can settle matters at our leisure. Only be off; he is at Cordova now, but he won't be there long. Don't wait to be caught. The *Reyna* sails at four."

"I should not be caught," said John, proudly; "I should tell my own tale voluntarily."

"And be carried to England a disgraced schoolboy! What a fool you are!"

"My folly has been in listening to you," was the indignant reply. "If I go to Barcelona, it is not to escape Neville."

"But to get back to England the quickest way you can," said the Baron. "Be it so; only remember there is such a thing as honour." And again he broke into German.

By this time I was utterly miserable. I had heard far more than I intended — far more than was meant for my ear. I felt that I could bear it no longer; and I was upon the point of coming forward, when John Penrhyn replied in an angry tone to the Baron's speech, and breaking from him rushed down the corridor. The Baron closed the door behind him, and sitting down to the little table which stood against the wall, drew forth a pocket-book, and began to make memoranda.

My shame and fright were indescribable.

His back was towards me, and for a moment I

thought whether it would be possible for me to glide by him unobserved; but it was impossible. The door was closed; I could not open it noiselessly. There was no alternative; and boldly in appearance, though with a quaking heart, I stepped forth from my hiding-place.

The Baron started, and the expression of his face was something not to be forgotten. "I am afraid," I said, "there has been some mistake. The waiter showed me into this room, and told me I might wait here."

He rose, and drawing close to me, he seized both my hands, and said, as he looked at me fixedly —

"You are a spy;" and he grasped my wrists so fiercely that I could scarcely help crying out, and repeated very slowly, "You are a spy."

I was calm — I was too frightened to be otherwise — and I answered as slowly:

"I am waiting for Miss Randolph; I came into this room by mistake. Release me, sir, or I shall call for assistance."

"Call!" he said, "and who will come? You are a spy."

"And you," I replied, "profess to be a gentleman; act as a gentleman, and release me."

His grasp was still fiercer, but his tone became quieter.

"After all," he said, "you have heard nothing."

"Nothing of consequence," I answered; "nothing that can do harm."

"No, nothing; yet, as it is nothing, you shall promise that you will not repeat or reveal it."

"I will promise anything," was my reply. "I have heard but a few words; I could only partially understand them."

"But you know him — the young fellow who is gone?"

"Oh, yes, I know him — Mr. Penrhyn."

"And you bind yourself neither to repeat a word, nor to say that you have seen him?"

I hesitated; the man's look became threatening.

"You had better," he muttered.

I was so excessively terrified that my mind became, as it were, a blank. I could think neither of what was asked of me, nor of what the consequences might be. I cared only to escape, and I exclaimed hastily —

"Oh! yes, I promise. There is no one to tell, no one who would care — I promise."

"And I trust you," he said; "spy or no spy, I trust you. If you are unworthy of trust, revenge is easy — and sure."

He released my hands, and I hurried out of the room and sank down upon the floor of the corridor, faint with terror. A waiter came by, but he could only speak Spanish. I managed to ask for a glass of water, which he brought me, and then looking at me in extreme astonishment, left me, I imagine intending to find some one to assist me; but before he could return, I was sufficiently recovered to stand; and when

he brought back a Frenchman, I declined any physical help, but explained that I was waiting for a friend, who was with an English lady, Mrs. Randolph. "Would the waiter go to her? would he tell her I was not well? I wished to go home directly." I said it all quite quietly; — I felt stunned. Only when I looked at the door of the room where the Baron still was, it required all my self-control to prevent myself from rushing away, in the dread I felt lest he should appear again.

I don't know how long I stayed; it seemed half an hour, it might have been less. I thought the waiter had forgotten me. I again paced the corridor, but my brain seemed still bewildered: it was as if I could not understand anything clearly. Several persons, from time to time, came into the corridor, but none took any notice of me further than to stare and pass on. I went at last to the further end, and made my way into a passage beyond, and there, to my immense relief, I stumbled upon the French waiter, busy in ushering a new party, just arrived, into their rooms. I stopped him, asked why he had not come back to me, and he smiled at me quite civilly and answered, "Did not Madame know? He was very sorry; he had sent a message. The young lady was gone."

"Gone!" I repeated, "when? where?"

"He did not know; he could tell nothing;" and with a little impatient shrug of the shoulders, he devoted himself again to his new charge, and I turned back into the corridor and descended the staircase. At

the bottom I found the Commissionaire who had brought us to the Fonda; Marietta, I supposed, would be with him.

The man was waiting. "He had not seen Mademoiselle; she had not been there. He must have seen her if she had passed."

I was surprised, but Marietta, I knew, was independent. Missing me, she might have chosen (though it would have been very unwise) to walk back to the hotel by herself. I prepared a lecture for her; but when I reached The Cid, and went up to our rooms, Marietta was not there. Then I did feel uncomfortable. To miss each other in this unaccountable way in a Spanish town was excessively awkward. But still I was scarcely what could be called uneasy. I felt sure there must be some blunder, and taking the Commissionaire with me, I went back to the Fonda de Paris. On my way I asked some questions about the vessel — the *Reyna*.

"Where was it going?"

"To Barcelona," was the answer. "It was one of the steamers which called at different places on the coast. They were not exact as to time. People never knew when they would arrive or when they would start, but, as soon as they came in, a paper was put up in the office, to give notice when they would be off again. Did I seek for further information? If so, the office was quite close; in fact, we were just passing it."

Something — I scarcely know what — induced me

to agree to this suggestion. I followed the Commissionnaire into the office, and saw the bills pasted against the wall giving notice that the *Reyna* would start for Barcelona at four o'clock. By this time it was two. Very little chance there was of my meeting John Penrhyn, yet I looked at every stranger anxiously; I longed so much to see the face of an English friend.

Still more did I long for it after my second visit to the Fonda de Paris. Lady Chase herself came to speak to me. She did not ask me into her apartment; but she looked me boldly in the face, told me that Mrs. Randolph was extremely ill, and could see no one, and assured me that Marietta had gone more than an hour ago.

At the very moment she spoke I felt she was telling me a lie, and I turned from her with a feeling of frightened despair. I walked out of the hotel. The Commissionnaire inquired where I would go next. I paused in utter bewilderment. "Would I like to go into the Glorieta — the public garden? Every stranger should see the Glorieta." A desperate hope seized me that perhaps I might find John Penrhyn there. A man's help, a man's counsel were what I needed; and we went to the Glorieta. I know little what it was like. I believe there were straight walks, and orange-trees and little statues; and I remember the Commissionnaire took me across a bridge over the narrow, dried-up Guadalquiver, and made me look back and admire the Eastern look of the town, with its domes and palm-

trees; but the one thought in my mind was to find John Penrhyn. Marietta was then secondary. She was not lost — I knew the idea was an absurdity; but my belief, my firm belief, was that Lady Chase, for purposes of her own, was bent upon preventing her return to me. I wandered about till half-past three. Then a sudden thought struck me. I would go to the harbour. If the steamer was to sail at four, and if John Penrhyn really intended to go by her, that would be my best and indeed my only chance of meeting him. The hope gave me fresh courage, and, though nearly worn out with fatigue and fear, I hurried down to the harbour. The *Reyna* was lying outside the harbour getting up her steam, the quay was crowded with men, women, children, luggage, and porters. Boats were passing backwards and forwards between the steamer and the shore. The rough look of the common people — their loud cries, their unintelligible patois, their stare of astonishment at me and my dress — completed my misery. I sat down on a bench on the quay to avoid the rude pressure of the crowd, and the Commissionnaire stood by me. I watched every one that came by, and I bade the man look out for an English gentleman; but the press of people around us was great and confusing. In about ten minutes, however, I started up and rushed to the water's edge. A boat was on the point of putting off, and in it I felt quite sure that I saw John Penrhyn. There was a little delay on account of a portmanteau which was to be put into the boat; it was the same I had seen at

Aranjuez. As I reached the edge of the quay, it was tossed in. I called on John by name. He heard me, and half raised himself, waved his handkerchief; shouted, "Where did you come from? good-bye." The next instant the boat pushed off, and I was alone. I really cannot describe my feelings at that moment. It is painful to me to recall them. I ought to have felt trust in God's Providence, but though I did pray the feeling of trust was gone. A woman standing near me asked if I was ill. The Commissionnaire, — frightened as he looked at me, — begged that he might fetch a *tartana;* but I refused any help, and only said I was tired. One train of fears after another came rushing through my mind, and, for a few seconds, I know that I had lost all judgment; but the very extent of my helplessness, after a short interval, roused me to self-control. I felt that I must do something, and that something must be to return to the hotel. What was to come after I could not think, but I did feel then that God would surely direct me.

I was not equal to the walk back to the Fonda, and the Commissionaire was despatched for a *tartana.*

He came back soon, and I was upon the very point of stepping into the carriage when a voice near me exclaimed: "Mrs. Anstruther, found at last! I have been hunting for you all day;" and turning round I saw Mr. Neville; by his side stood the Baron. That presence kept me from being absurdly weak, but I am sure that tears were in my eyes as I grasped Mr. Neville's hand, and drew him aside.

"It was you then," I exclaimed, "really you, who sent for us last night?"

"Yes. Who else could it be? I made a blunder; passed the station which should have taken me by a branch line to Santa Cruz, and so on by Diligence to Cordova; had to wait a couple of hours before I could return, and in that time met a friend who assured me John Penryhn was at Valencia — he had just left him there. So I came on and left my luggage to its fate. It is lying at Cordova at this moment; and last night, as I thought it might be helpful to you to have a Commissionaire ready, I sent one to meet you." (I have thought since — I did not think then — that it was singular Mr. Neville did not come to meet us himself.)

"We rejected him very ungraciously," I said; "but who could have supposed that he was your messenger. Besides, I had other suspicions. But you have seen John Penrhyn?"

Though I had turned away from the Baron, yet as I spoke I felt his eye upon me, and something compelled me to glance at him. The expression of his face made me shudder.

Mr. Neville replied hastily: "That is precisely what I have not done. I am told he sailed for Malaga yesterday." An exclamation rose to my lips, but was checked in the utterance. The basilisk eye was upon me, and I said nothing.

"I don't regret it," continued Mr. Neville; "at least I shall not if I can be of any use to you, and

if you won't reject me. And how is Miss Randolph?"

"Where? rather," I said very gravely, and for a moment I was tempted to confront the Baron, and in Mr. Neville's presence, insist upon his taking me to Marietta; but prudence whispered that I might do mischief by betraying my suspicions, and I merely said, "Get into the carriage with me and you shall hear;" so I jumped in without waiting for assistance. Mr. Neville undertook to dismiss the Commissionaire; and whilst he was speaking to him the Baron came close to me and murmured in my ear "Remember!" Then he lifted his hat from his head with an air of the most profound courtesy, and drew back amongst the crowd.

"A rascal if ever one breathed!" exclaimed Mr. Neville, looking after him and then seating himself beside me; "but tell me, what do you mean? How is — Marietta — Miss Randolph? over-fatigued, ill, unhappy?" He stopped.

"Gone, I cannot tell where," was my reply; and driving through the narrow streets, and over the rough pavement in our jolting conveyance, I told him all that had occurred. I watched his face as he spoke, hoping to make out what he thought, and whether there was any real cause for uneasiness. But he was imperturbable. Only at the end he said, "Of course she is with Mrs. Randolph."

"Of course she is," I said; "Marietta is no baby to be lost in a foreign town. But the people who can tell such falsehoods must have some strong motive

for it, and how, in spite of them, am I to get hold of her?"

"Leave it to me," was the reply; "let me take you home, and then leave it to me."

How thankful I was to be able to do so no words can say. We drove back to The Cid, and I rushed up the stairs with a vague hope that possibly we might find Marietta there. But no; the room was precisely as I had left it; — Marietta's writing-case on the table, by it the Guide-Book which she diligently studied, her umbrella in the corner. I noticed all the little things with a kind of prophetic pang. It was not fear, but a feeling that in some way she was to be no longer mine. Mr. Neville waited but a moment, his face had shown his disappointment when he first entered the room; but he only looked round and said, "I thought not; you shall hear of her in another hour," and then hastened away.

I did not take off my bonnet and shawl; I did not feel that I could do anything but sit quite still just where he left me, for when I found myself alone the feeling of suspense awoke again; and it increased, as time went by and Mr. Neville did not return. We were to have dined at the *table d'hôte*, but the dinner hour came and passed, and I took no notice of it till I was conscious of being faint and hungry, and then I had recourse to our luncheon basket; and afterwards I walked up and down the room, and going to the window, looked out into the narrow back street; then, hearing a noise of people collecting together, I went

out into the corridor to inquire what was the cause, and confronted the Prince of Barbary, a black man in a kind of Oriental dress, who was coming up the stairs, followed by a train of attendants and the obsequious landlord; and then a band in the square opposite began to play an air from the "Trovatore," in bad tune and worse time, and I followed the notes one after the other, with a nervous desire to rush out and put them right, and went back to my room still going over the tune, still dwelling upon the wrong time, just as if it were the one thing of consequence, the one necessity for me that it should be put right.

At seven o'clock Mr. Neville returned. I heard his step in the corridor, and hurried to meet him. He was alone, and my heart sank.

But his first words were reassuring. "We were right. She is there."

"And you have seen her?"

"Yes, and brought a note from her."

He gave it me, and I tore it open and read aloud: —

"DEAREST MRS. ANSTRUTHER, — I must stay here, my poor aunt is so ill. I cannot bear to leave you alone. Will you let my trunk be sent to me? We shall meet to-morrow.

"Yours most affectionately,

"M. R."

"And why did she not let me know this before?"

I exclaimed, in what I am aware was a tone of disappointed irritability.

"Because she had done so," was the dry answer.

"What do you mean?"

"Miss Randolph wrote you a longer note; it was given to Lady Chase to give to you. She came back and said you were gone, but that the note had been despatched by a porter."

"But it was false," I exclaimed.

"Not at all," continued Mr. Neville, still in the same dry, almost sarcastic tone. "If you remember, you did go."

"But why did Lady Chase herself send me away a second time without telling me of the note; and why did she say that Marietta had left the Fonda?"

"Because she believed it, fully believed it. The assurance is given on Lady Chase's honour;" and Mr. Neville laughed — a mocking laugh — "Marietta — I beg her pardon, Miss Randolph — was with her aunt; Lady Chase did not know this; she understood she was gone, and said so. It is all quite simple, quite clear."

"Not to me," I said, "neither to you. Why should Marietta have written to me and entrusted the note to Lady Chase, if she intended to return to me?"

His manner changed. "The woman is as false as hell," he exclaimed, "but she is as clever as Satan."

"And did she say all this herself?" I inquired.

"Yes, with an unblushing face, after keeping me waiting nearly two hours under pretence of being en-

gaged. I should not have seen Miss Randolph at last if I had not insisted upon it in a way which showed her I was not to be trifled with."

"And when Marietta came, what did you get from her?"

"Surprise, and this note. She thought I was at Cordova."

"And you explained?"

"No, I explained nothing. Lady Chase stayed in the room, and I was not going to say before her that I came here in search of John Penrhyn."

"And did Marietta say nothing more about her aunt? Did she send no message, no love?"

"Oh yes, a great deal of love, but she was called away in the middle of her message. Mrs. Randolph wanted her."

"Most unsatisfactory," I said.

"Yes, most unsatisfactory." And then we sat and looked at each other in silence, till Mr. Neville got up and took his hat.

"Are you going?" I said. "Can't you stay? But you would be better on the spot where Marietta is."

"I can do nothing," he replied, "and I must start to-night for Alicante."

"To-night?"

"Yes, I must, without delay, make my way to Malaga to see after John Penrhyn."

I started; I was upon the very point of saying, "He is not there;" but the recollection of my promise to the

Baron checked me, and I only exclaimed hurriedly, "and Marrietta and I must be left?"

"It is very ungallant, very uncourteous, but I have no alternative."

"Mr. Neville," I said, "I think you and I understand each other. Ungallant, uncourteous, are words which, under present circumstances, have no meaning. I say to you truly that I am very anxious about Marietta's position, that I want advice and help; and I ask you very earnestly to stay."

"Mrs. Anstruther, I say to you in answer, that I would cut off my right hand to please, to help" — the colour flushed to his face and faded away like a girl's — "to be of service to you, but I must go. You may trust to me, however, to return almost immediately; and in the meantime I have an English friend resident here, a merchant, to whom you may apply in any difficulty."

"But why go? what for? what motive?" I knew I spoke quite incoherently; and Mr. Neville looked at me in utter astonishment.

"Are you so very much alarmed?" he said.

"Not alarmed, oh no, nothing can happen, but I entreat you not to go."

"I fear it is my duty," he said, calmly.

"But there may be another duty, a contrary one."

"I don't understand. If you want protection I will do my best to find out some one here who will protect you." I could discover a slight tone of contempt in his voice. He looked upon me as a weak

woman, given up to absurd fears; but I cared not for his opinion. I felt I must keep him at all hazards, and I asked myself was I really bound by my promise to the Baron, a promise extorted as it was by fear. But I had no leisure for casuistry, and, great as was the temptation, I resisted it.

"It is not for myself," I said. "I have reasons — I can't explain. I beg you only to trust me, and I entreat you, stay at least till to-morrow. If you fear for John Penrhyn's being led into evil, remember his chief enemy is here."

That suggestion seemed to strike him. He thought for a few seconds, and then he said, "Till to-morrow — it could do no harm till to-morrrow."

"Yes, only till to-morrow," I exclaimed. "One knows not what may happen before then. And if you would but trust me!"

"I don't understand, dear Mrs. Anstruther. Why should I not trust you? But it will be better for me to go now. You will be calmer, quieter to-morrow. I will see you the first thing in the morning. You may be sure I will take care that you shall have some one to apply to. Pray be calm. Is there nothing else I can do for you this evening?"

I felt so excited, so indignant, so vexed and ashamed — I scarcely know what I said; and Mr. Neville shook hands heartily, wished me good evening, and went back to the Fonda de Paris.

I almost hated him. He had misunderstood me, he had failed in sympathy, he had scarcely the ordinary

chivalry of a gentleman; above all, he looked down upon me — no woman can bear that thought with patience, much less with humility. I was thankful to be alone that I might give vent to my feelings without restraint. "Go! yes, he should go if he wished it, wherever he liked, as soon as he liked. He must manage his affairs his own way, and leave me to manage mine. Whatever might be my difficulties, I would never again humble myself to ask Mr. Neville's assistance."

For a time I was in a tumult of indignant annoyance, but I reasoned myself into a more Christian frame of mind before I went to bed. Mr. Neville was cold, that was undoubted; and he thought me a silly woman given up to nervous fears, that also was certain: but then he did not, and could not, know all my causes for uneasiness. And as I had hitherto managed my affairs for myself, it was natural for him to suppose that I could continue to do so, and that it was his duty to go after John Penrhyn. The one real pressing disquietude was the knowledge that he was going to Malaga on false information. If I could only have made up my mind whether I was at liberty to break my promise to that wretched Baron, I could have borne other vexations with comparative indifference, but I thought and thought, and resolved and counter-resolved, and was no nearer a decision at the end than I was at the beginning.

Very lonely was that little back room in the Fonda del Cid, very dreary it was to be without Marietta, without even the company of a fire. The Southern

brightness which had made the day so charming was but a half compensation for the long evening, just chilly enough to need a shawl; and the weather seemed about to change. I had seen clouds that day, for the first time since we crossed the Sierra Guadarrama, and gusts of wind had blown about the dust in the streets. How miserable it all was! I am not likely to forget it! And in the bottom of my heart I felt that I could only comfort myself by saying, as my old nurse used to say to me, when I felt the first symptoms of a nervous headache, "Never seem to heed it; the worst is to come."

CHAPTER XV.

(Continuation.)

THE next day was Sunday: it brought comfort at its very commencement. I sent the Commissionnaire to the post, in the very vague hope that there might be letters for me or for Marietta.

He brought back one from Ina, written in better spirits, though she greatly bemoaned my continued absence. "Henry Anson had arrived, and was likely to stay some days. Hearing his account of us had been delightful, and seeing him was like seeing a bit of home. They were going for a drive that afternoon, and there was some idea of a ride the next day, if Mrs. Strangways' habit would fit Ina."

This was the beginning of the letter; the end was written after the ride, and contained what was to me an interesting piece of information.

"I must tell you, dear mamma, what Mr. Anson says about 'Cousin John,' and why Mr. Neville is rushing after him. I doubt whether Mr. Neville would wish me to know; but as I do know, there can be no harm in mentioning it to you. 'Cousin John' is a nephew of that old Mr. Neville in the north who is so rich, so he is first cousin to our Mr. Neville. Everybody thought till lately that our Mr. Neville (Edward

Neville) would be the heir; but 'Cousin John' has quite supplanted him, and the old man has given out that all his money is to be left to him. Now John is going on unsatisfactorily; Mr. Anson did not tell me how, but he said that he has been extravagant and getting into bad company, and that if the old man were to hear of it, 'Cousin John' would be out of his uncle's good graces, and Mr. Neville would be in favour again, and no doubt inherit the property. Mr. Anson hopes it may be so. He says that it has been very hard upon Mr. Neville, and that everyone thinks so except Mr. Neville himself, who is bent upon bringing John back to England and keeping him out of mischief. This was all told me in profound secrecy, except that I warned Mr. Anson I never kept anything from you. I think he is pleased to have some one to talk to who can enter into things which interest him, for he is terribly out of spirits. I can't help thinking there must be something wrong between him and Marietta, because he shrinks so from mentioning her name.

"I have had a letter from grandmamma, with a budget of news about Arling. Lord Hopeton, she says, has just come of age, and there are to be great rejoicings. It seems so odd to me not even to wish to be there, but I don't. I like my quiet life here a great deal better, and now that I have begun to ride I shall be able to see a good deal of the country. We go out in large parties; but I keep just to my own friends, and make scarcely any new acquaintances."

Very like Ina that letter is! Hers is a mind which

so seeks after distractions that it is always more or less disappointing to me. But one must learn to take all characters as they are, and not expect from them that which God has not thought fit to bestow. But though I felt a little pained, I had no time then to think about it. I expected Mr. Neville every moment, and the question to be decided was, whether I should or should not tell him that if he went to Malaga he would be acting on false information. I thought over the matter again, and with a much deeper interest — a much more kindly sympathy — than I had felt the night before. Ina's letter had thrown a new light on Mr. Neville's character. So honourable, so conscientious! He would work all the more earnestly to save John Penrhyn, because in doing so he would be saving his rival. Of course, therefore, he would think himself bound to sacrifice any ordinary claim like mine, and would steel himself against my representations in a way which could not but appear ungracious.

I was ashamed of my previous bitterness of feeling; I longed to make my confession; but Mr. Neville is not at all an approachable person. I respect him — but own a weakness, a fault to him! no, that would be impossible.

Time went on. I thought of all which might depend on Mr. Neville's finding John Penrhyn, and I blamed myself for having kept him with me for an hour. The more I considered the matter, the less I felt bound by my extorted promise; and yet my very soul recoiled from the thought of breaking it. I had never done

such a thing before; I felt as if my self-respect would be gone if I should do it. And then the fear! I know that told upon me. I shuddered as I remembered that horrible expression of countenance. I was working myself back again into the agitation and weakness of the preceding evening, and in the midst of my distress Mr. Neville was announced.

"He had come," he said, "with a message from Miss Randolph. She was most anxious to see me. There were some new plans on foot, he could not tell what; but he had reason to think there was an idea of leaving Valencia almost immediately."

"Then it will be for the purpose of avoiding me," I said; "I have suspected it ever since I found those wretched people here. Lady Chase will never let me see Mrs. Randolph."

"But why not?"

"Because she knows that I am not come, like Marietta, to nurse and pet her, but that I am also resolved to bring her to some settlement of Marietta's affairs. There can be no other cause for all this mystery."

Mr. Neville became instantly attentive.

"I thought Miss Randolph was quite independent of her aunt," he said.

"Partly, not wholly. She has her own little fortune, but there is a sum of two thousand pounds which ought to be hers, but which has been left partially in Mrs. Randolph's hands. One of my chief motives for undertaking this Spanish journey has been to urge Mrs. Ran-

dolph to do what is necessary in order that Marietta may have it."

"But she is not dishonourable," he exclaimed.

"Oh no. She is only weak and ill and procrastinating; and this miserable woman who haunts her has entirely the upper hand of her."

"But surely if Lady Chase had any sinister intention she would not wish to keep Miss Randolph with her aunt, but would rather desire to separate them. Miss Randolph's influence —"

"Will never be exerted in her own favour," I said; "Marietta is a mere baby in business matters, and so wildly romantic that I have never yet ventured to tell her what I have at heart. She would refuse, I am convinced, to have the jubject mentioned to Mrs. Randolph, because it would seem that she had a mercenary object in view in coming to Spain."

Mr. Neville thought for a few moments, then he said, "Yes, I see, it may be so; but Miss Randolph intimated that you would see her aunt."

"If I do," I said, "Lady Chase will take care that I shall have no opportunity of speaking to her alone. In fact, Mr. Neville, I have an absolute distrust of the whole party. I think, and I have good reason to think, that if Marietta should remain with her aunt they will play upon her unselfishness, and make her do precisely what they wish, and so her money and her time, everything, in fact, will be sacrificed, and no one will be able to interfere. For myself, I have nothing to do but to go back to England, and blame myself for ever

having been weak enough to put this poor child into such a position."

"It might have been wiser not to have come," he said, gravely.

"Yes, it would have been wiser, only if I had not accompanied Marietta, she would have come alone. She was bent upon it, and I have no authority over her. There is not a single human being who really has a right to command her."

"A dangerous position for a young lady," said Mr. Neville, with his half-satirical smile.

I was in no mood for satire, and I said quickly, "You would feel as I do, Mr. Neville, if you could face what it will be to leave this poor child here, in the care of such people; — in intimate association with Baron von Bronnen."

He started, as if he had been stung. "You don't think for an instant, Mrs. Anstruther, that I don't feel it." He turned away from me, walked to the window, and stood there in silence for some seconds. When he came back to me he said, "I shall not leave Valencia till I see further into this matter."

"Thank you," was my reply, "thank you heartily," and I grasped his hand. It was very cold, and I felt it tremble. He was perhaps troubled as to his decision; and was thinking of John Penrhyn. Yet that was not like him — it would be a woman's scrupulousness, not a man's. But I felt I must tell him what I knew, all the more because he was going to do me a service.

I could not let him act in the dark. I would only wait till after my interview with Marietta.

Just because we were thinking of something else, I said, "I have heard from Ina. Mr. Anson is at Pau, and in bad spirits. Ina thinks there must have been something uncomfortable between him and Marietta."

It did not do; he would not follow up the subject, but merely said, "Oh! he had supposed Henry Anson was in England by this time." And then he asked if he should come for me at twelve, and go with me to the Fonda de Paris. It was the hour Marietta had named; this was agreed upon, and we separated.

At twelve we went to the Fonda. Mr. Neville wished to leave me to see Marietta alone, but I insisted upon his going upstairs with me. We were shown into a kind of *salon* — the bed-recesses being shut in by glass doors; — whose room it was I did not know. I suppose we waited full half an hour before Marietta came. She was not prepared to see Mr. Neville; her face flushed, and she was embarrassed. They scarcely spoke to each other, and Marietta asked no explanation as to why he was here and not at Cordova. I suppose he had told his tale when he saw her in the morning. She seemed wholly taken up with me; and when I found that everything seemed to be going on naturally, without mystery or effort, I thought Mr. Neville would be better away, and told him so plainly; and he professed himself quite willing to go, as he had to telegraph for his luggage, the greater part of which had been sent by Diligence from

Madrid to Cordova, and was no doubt quietly reposing at the latter place. "Whether he should ever see it again was a matter of doubt. Spain was the last country in the world in which it was wise to part company with one's luggage."

"It is very vexatious," said Marietta.

"No, not vexatious, Miss Randolph, only unfortunate. Mrs. Anstruther, I shall call for you again — when?"

"In half an hour — three quarters of an hour — an hour — Marietta, what do you say?"

"An hour, if you please," was Marietta's decided reply; and she stood up and waited till Mr. Neville was out of the room, and then gave me a regular Italian greeting.

Seeing her again was like a refreshing breeze; I scarcely knew before how dreary and anxious I had been. We talked over the last evening's misadventure, if I may so call it, and Marietta persisted it was all a blunder. Lady Chase had been as distressed as I was, and would have gone herself to explain matters to me, only it was so very late; and then they knew I had Mr. Neville with me.

"But he was very near leaving me," I said. "He had made up his mind to start for Malaga."

Marietta did not speak instantly, and, in the momentary pause, I felt nearly sure that I heard a rustling, as if some one was moving behind the closed glass doors. I looked round. Marietta said carelessly. "Those men are in and out of the room as they choose;

you know there is another door, and they need not come in here; but it is immensely awkward, and my poor aunt says she really can't bear it any longer, and she proposes going to Malaga. We shall have things more comfortable there. That was what I wished to talk to you about. She thought if you could go with us, then perhaps you might get back to England by the Peninsular and Oriental steamer."

"But Ina," I said.

"Ah, yes! how stupid! But people are always going back from Pau. Surely she would find an escort."

"I must return to Pau," I said; "I long for it. I must see that all is done as I wished." I knew my voice changed, and Marietta's quick sympathy was instantly awakened.

"Ah!" she said, "you must not think I forget, but it is so strange to be here. It makes other things a hundred years gone by. I would not be selfish, only I long to have you, to keep you."

"I could not be with you much, dear child!" I said. "I can't tolerate Lady Chase, though you can."

"But you don't think," she exclaimed, "that Lady Chase is going to stay with us? Oh no! She goes back to Paris immediately."

"And the Baron?"

"To the moon, for aught I know. Certainly he does not go with us."

"But what brought him here?"

"Kindness. They really are kind. I can't help

seeing that. Lady Chase nurses my poor aunt like a sister."

"And Mrs. Randolph requires such nursing?" I said.

"Oh yes, she is so changed, so ill, she can do so very little. But it is owing to a cold she caught in Madrid, and she feels certain she shall get better at Malaga; and then when the summer comes we shall go back to England."

"We!" I repeated. "Then it is all settled, Marietta, and you leave me!"

She broke down then. The calmness and cheerfulness had been assumed. It was a bitter prospect, but she felt it to be right, and was nerving herself for it, and buoying herself up with the thought that the summer would bring her to England, and the old relations would be resumed.

We talked a long time, and I saw more and more plainly how independent Marietta's course was likely to be; how little, even if she had remained with me, I could have been able to direct it. Her strong feeling had hidden a good deal from me, and I had reckoned upon her love for Ina as an influence greater than it really was. It was romance — but Marietta's heart requires more than romance; and Ina is her inferior both in mind and talent. As we went on, the way seemed to open — clear, but desolate for us both — Marietta had no doubt as to her duty; I had none as to mine, only I was not quite certain as to whether it would or would not be wise to go to Malaga. That

required a little thought. I asked if I might see Mrs. Randolph?

"Yes, certainly, as soon as she is equal to it," was Marietta's reply.

"But is she not equal to it now?"

"I think not just this morning, she has had such a bad night, and Lady Chase begged so hard that I would keep her quiet."

The old misgivings awoke. "If Mrs. Randolph could get over the first meeting," I said, "she would not be upset again."

"Oh no! and I have told her that she must see you, and she is really anxious to do it. She knows how very, very kind you have been to me."

"I don't want to be thanked," I answered, coldly.

Marietta laughed as she said, caressingly, "So very proud! But if others thank you, I never shall. There are some things far beyond thanks," she added in an undertone.

I returned to the subject of Mrs. Randolph. I asked again if it was quite certain I should see her if I called later — at five o'clock — six — seven: I would come at any hour.

Marietta was perfectly simple and true in her answer: she was quite certain I might see her, but she must first consult Lady Chase.

"My dear child," I said at last, "when are you going to cut Lady Chase, and act on your own responsibility?"

"When I quite understand what my responsibility

involves," was Marietta's answer; and I had nothing more to say.

Mr. Neville came for me; that is to say, he sent up word that he was waiting for me, and I went back with him to the Fonda del Cid.

On our way we walked a little about the town, and went into the Iglesia de la Congregacion, where we heard part of a sermon, of which I could just make out that it was upon the necessity of faith. Then to another church, the Santos Juanes. Both churches were well filled. Outside, in the market-place, there was a crowd, buying and selling. It was all very strange, very unlike Sunday, and the isolated feeling was most dispiriting. Mr. Neville again volunteered remaining at Valencia, till I had finally determined by which route I would return. He hoped he might be able to take care of me. As to John Penrhyn, if he was at Malaga, he said, he should meet him there; if not, there was little doubt that he would have sailed for England. At any rate, half his anxiety was over, now that he knew him to be no longer in Baron von Bronnen's neighbourhood. I was most thankful, and yet I felt myself a traitor. He said this just as we were at the cathedral, and about to mount the steps of the tower. A French gentleman joined us there, and I had no opportunity of saying anything in reply. The view from the top was striking, extending over the far-famed *Huerta* of Valencia, a rich plain covered with houses, orchards, and gardens; the Mediterranean bounding it to the south and east, and a chain of rocky

hills to the north and west. It made me think of the Val d'Arno; but Florence is far more picturesque than Valencia, though people do talk of the Moorish domes of the latter. But I wonder that I retain any impression of the view, for all the time I was looking at it I was thinking of the communication which I was to make to Mr. Neville, and its possible consequences. But still there was a delay. The French gentleman walked with us to The Cid, and then Mr. Neville and he went off in another direction; Mr. Neville promising, however, to return again shortly.

So there was a respite, but about five o'clock he came back, and by that time I had received a note from Marietta, saying that it was quite decided they should leave for Malaga the next day, if the steamer which was expected came in early. Perhaps Lady Chase would go with them, as she talked of returning to England immediately, but at any rate the Baron would remain behind at Valencia. She earnestly begged that I would think over the matter, and make up my mind to accompany them.

I put the note into Mr. Neville's hands. His remark was, "Just the very best arrangement. It will cut the Gordian knot for us all."

"Not for you," I said. "John Penryhn is at Barcelona." As I spoke the words I felt as if I had committed a sin; and yet I was relieved. At any rate, there was no drawing back.

Mr. Neville looked at me, not half comprehend-

ing me. Then came the natural question, "how I knew it?"

I related my interview with the Baron; and as I told it, I could see Mr. Neville's face grow dark with some feeling, whether of indignation or annoyance I could not tell.

When I finished, he said, in a tone of cold but intense irritation, "If I had only been told this before! It is immensely provoking. I can't see what is to be done."

He had not a word or thought for my terror, or for my conscience.

"Perhaps I ought to have spoken before," I said; "but I felt myself bound —"

"To let that ruffian tell a lie before your face without contradicting him. I don't understand such scruples. But, forgive me, Mrs. Anstruther, I daresay you were frightened."

"Yes," I said, "I was frightened; but more than that, I had a scruple. You may not understand it, but I had it, and I have it still. I am not at all sure that I have done right. And besides, Mr. Neville, suppose I had told you, what could you have done which you have not done?"

"I could have set off for Barcelona last night by the Diligence."

"And left me to the vengeance of Baron von Bronnen. I don't think you would have done that."

He made no answer, but his brow relaxed a little. He sat down, leaning his head upon his hand, and

thinking. I was determined not to speak again till he did, for he was just in that mood in which he would be certain to take up anything I said perversely: so I seated myself also, and turned over the pages of the guide-book.

Presently he looked up and said, "You go to Malaga to-morrow?"

"I think so. I have nearly resolved."

"Perhaps you will be able quite to resolve. It is impossible to act upon uncertainties."

"Well," I replied, hesitatingly; "I think — I confess I see no alternative."

"There is none," he replied, "I shall see you off, and then —"

"You will go yourself to Barcelona. I am very sorry."

"So am I." He stood up to go, but waited, and I was sure that he felt he ought to make an apology for his petulance, but I would not help him. I only stood as he did, and looked at him.

He was going to say good-bye coldly; but — I don't know how it was — I suppose we were neither of us really angry with each other — his fingers no sooner touched mine than a cloud seemed to pass away from his face, and grasping my hand, he exclaimed, "Don't be hard upon me, Mrs. Anstruther. There are times when the burden of life seems too much for one, but it will be right enough by-and-by."

I did not understand, but of course I responded in his own tone, and he departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

(Continuation.)

THERE is no need to relate all the worry of my mind that evening, when I felt that I was again left to myself to manage an interview with Mrs. Randolph as I could, in spite of Lady Chase, and to make all my plans fit in with the necessity of bringing back Ina from Pau; to say nothing of the choice between the solitary return journey through the centre of Spain, or else the wretched voyage, which I dreaded nearly as much. It seemed almost cruel of Mr. Neville to leave me, to pursue this wild search after John Penrhyn, knowing that he would, in all probability, be of no possible use to him. But it was no good to think, or to regret; I had acted for the best, and when I undertook to go with Marietta to Spain I was aware there would be difficulties, only I had not expected them to come precisely in this form. There was, however, one comfort; as long as I was in the same town with Baron von Bronnen, Mr. Neville would be there also, and when I was gone, I need not trouble myself about the Baron's revenge.

So I rose the next morning happier and braver, and Mr. Neville came early, and was full of kind thoughts and encouragements. We did not refer to

anything that had passed, but I could not help seeing that he was anxious to make up for anything which might have annoyed me: and, speaking generally, that is the utmost one can expect from a man in the way of acknowledgment of anything amiss; and I have learnt to be satisfied with it.

I had sent word to Marietta the evening before that I would agree to go to Malaga; and had begged her to let me know, as soon as she could, at what hour the steamer would sail, and how we were to meet. Mr. Neville had just been to the office, and heard that the *Tajo* was in port, and would leave for Malaga that afternoon, at half-past three; the *Ebro* and the *Catalan* also were in, and would leave for Barcelona at two.

I thought he would not be able to see us off; but he said he should travel by the Diligence at night; it would take more time, but in some respects it would be better, he should be able to keep a longer watch upon the Baron's movements; and, at any rate, he certainly should not leave us behind him in Valencia. At ten o'clock came a note from Lady Chase, written for Mrs. Randolph, and telling me when and how we were to meet. I was to be on the quay at three o'clock precisely. It was thought better that I should not go to the Fonda, because it was so important that Mrs. Randolph should be kept quiet. I did not myself see why it would be more disturbing to her to meet me at the hotel, than an board the vessel, but I could do nothing but agree. Mr. Neville asked me what arrangement I should make about Ina, and all I could answer was

that really I did not know. I must try to find an escort for her from Pau. At the present moment I could think only of Marietta, and I should not be satisfied to leave her until I had put her under the care of some person who might be able to protect her in case she needed it.

"Thank you!" he exclaimed; and then he turned away, as if ashamed, and, for the first time, the thought flashed upon me — he loves her.

It was a revelation; but as I recalled all that had passed I marvelled that I had not seen the truth before. Once it had crossed my mind that Marietta cared for him; it was when she made that little exclamation as we said good-bye at Aranjuez, but after circumstances had put the idea out of my head. I did not feel in any way certain about her now, but the fact of his feeling would be a clue to his uncomfortable manner when Henry Anson lingered at Madrid; he would, I knew, be scrupulously honourable about standing in another person's way, and yet he must have seen that it was wiser and more right to send the young man home. The conflict of feeling would naturally make him what he was, cold and irritable. All this flashed through my mind, and I quite longed to be alone to think it over; but Mr. Neville gave me no time to think. As I was to have a spare morning, he proposed that we should go out and see what I had left unseen. He wanted something to do himself, I was sure. So we sallied forth, and he took me through the Calle de Caballeros, the aristocratic street of Valencia; and then

we went to the Plaza del Toro, and saw the arrangements for torturing the unhappy bulls, by pricking and goading them, so as to rouse them to frenzy before they are sent into the amphitheatre; and afterwards we went to some church (I forget the name) to look at La Señora de los Desemparados, an image of the Blessed Virgin splendidly dressed and covered with jewels, said to be worth 20,000*l.*; and then we visited the cigar manufactory, which employs five thousand women and girls, the best workers gaining about a *peseta*, or a shilling, a day; and at last we made our way to the Glorieta, where we sat down to rest.

Mr. Neville had all this time given himself up in the most exemplary manner to sight-seeing. If we neither of us had a care in the world, we could not have been more intent upon seeing everything that was to be seen. It was by that time one o'clock, and I was hungry; and besides, I had some little final arrangements to make at the Fonda, amongst others to pay my bill: so, after resting for about a quarter of an hour, I proposed to go back. We hired a *tartana*, as I was tired, and the driver was told to take us round by the Fonda de Paris. I thought I might at least see Marietta for a moment, and I wished to be quite certain about the time and place of meeting. We walked into the hotel, made our way up the dusky staircase to the room into which I had before been admitted; knocked, but had no answer; knocked again, still without any reply. Then I opened the door. The room was empty, and not merely that, but there were

no signs of any person's having been in it lately; no books or work on the table; only the chairs rather in disorder, as if it had been left hurriedly. There was no bell to ring, so Mr. Neville went down to make enquiries, and came back directly with a waiter whom he had met in the corridor, happily, a Frenchman. We both began at once. "Where were the ladies? Where was Mrs. Randolph?"

The man opened his eyes in astonishment. "Surely we knew, Madame was gone — and Mademoiselle, and Miladi, and Monsieur le Baron; they were all gone — just gone. They would sail by the *Ebro*."

"The *Ebro!* fool!" exclaimed Mr. Neville, and his face became white with irritation, and I suspect a sudden misgiving. "The *Ebro* goes to Barcelona."

"*Ah! oui, certainement. Monsieur a raison.*"

"But Mrs. Randolph is not going to Barcelona," thundered Mr. Neville.

He was angry; I was frightened. I went up to him and said, "It is a trick; we have not a moment to lose. They have deceived us."

"Deceived! Marietta deceive!" He turned upon me fiercely.

"There is but one thing to be done," I said — "to follow them. The *Ebro* does not sail till two, does it?" I added, appealing to the waiter.

He did not know, he would go and enquire. (Waiters never do know anything which one wishes them to know.)

I stopped him. "It is two," I said. "I am sure of it. We have just ——"

"*Un petit quart d'heure*," observed the man, taking out his watch.

"It is despair," said Mr. Neville. "They have the start of us completely."

"They will have if we don't make the effort." I did not wait for any more information, but hurried down the stairs. Mr. Neville by this time had recovered himself.

"What about your luggage?" he asked.

"We will think as we drive to the quay, only let us find out the truth." And as we rattled through the streets, we hastily digested our plans, proposing first one, then another, ending with the decision that if the *Ebro* were still in port, Mr. Neville should go on board and leave me to follow as I might — possibly by the *Catalan*, possibly by the Diligence. I felt sure I should be able to manage something. The one important point was not to let them escape from Mr. Neville. Then another idea suggested itself. Perhaps we had been hasty. Perhaps, after all, the waiter had blundered, and it was only Lady Chase who was gone. Marietta and Mrs. Randolph might be in the Fonda at that moment. We both laughed at the notion — it was a relief; but the laugh was not hearty. We reached the quay; a motley crowd had gathered there. They were watching the *Ebro*, as it steamed away from the shore. The *Catalan* was evidently preparing to follow.

We looked at each other; neither of us spoke for a few seconds. I confess my mind was a blank. Mr. Neville looked pale, but he was now quite cool and collected. It was better, he said, that he should go on board the *Catalan* instantly. He would leave all arrangements for his luggage to me. I should do well to drive back to the Fonda de Paris, make quite sure that Mrs. Randolph really was not there; and then, if I found it was as we feared, I might go back to "The Cid," settle everything, and come down again to the quay. It was possible, just possible, that I might be in time to join him on board the *Catalan;* if not I must take the long land journey by Diligence.

We grasped each other's hands and parted, Mr. Neville calling out, as he jumped into the boat which was to take him to the vessel, "The Cuatro Naciones is my hotel."

I don't think I felt frightened or nervous or lonely then. I prayed to be helped, and a Higher Power than my own kept me up.

Yet the drive seemed very long, and every minute was so precious! At the Fonda de Paris I could find only a Spanish waiter, and I could not make him understand me: but an English stranger came up and helped me, and explained what I wanted. The people made a fuss, and asserted again that Mrs. Randolph was gone, and could not comprehend why I doubted it. But I succeeded at last in persuading them to let me go upstairs to her room. And certainly it was as they had said, empty. A half-written note was on the

table, it was in Marietta's handwriting, and began, "My dearest friend, we start at ——" That was all. I put it in my bag. I then went to Mr. Neville's rooms, took possession of his luggage, and drove off to the Fonda del Cid. There, happily, everything was ready for my departure. My boxes had been brought down into the entrance hall, and I had only to pay my bill. Still a good deal of time had elapsed. I did not think it possible that I could get back to the *Catalan* before it started; and then my nervousness and fright began. I shall never forget the suspense I felt as we drove again through those noisy ill-paved streets, my head aching, my brain dizzy, and the jolting *tartana* stumbling along at a pace which it seemed impossible to quicken. I nearly fell in my eagerness to leave the vehicle, and, forgetting luggage, payment, everything, I rushed to the edge of the quay to look for the *Catalan*. Yes, there she was still, but getting up her steam, upon the very point of departure. Men crowded round me, offering me a boat, begging to take my luggage; the driver was exorbitant in his charge. They all did with me very much as they pleased. I paid the man some enormous sum — I have not been able since to make out how much. I seated myself in the worst boat, gave *pesetas* indiscriminately to the porters; and in return was assured that there was not a doubt I should be quite in time.

And I was in time. I say from the very bottom of my heart, "Thank God!" Mr. Neville handed me on board; and I believe then I was very foolish, and very

much inclined to faint. But I did not faint, it is not my custom. I took some brandy instead, and got much better, and then Mr. Neville sat down by me, and we talked.

I daresay it might have been better to rest, but I really could not rest till I had said out all my fears, and heard all his.

I don't know how it was, we seemed to understand each other without explanation; at least, I am sure he felt that I understood him. He said nothing about his feeling for Marietta, but it was implied; he did not try to conceal it, and I spoke as taking it for granted. I showed him the beginning of the note, and we agreed that she must have wished to let me know the change of plans, but had been prevented. There was not a shadow of doubt that she had been herself deceived, and the motive for the deception it was not very difficult to divine. Lady Chase and the Baron were resolved at all risks to keep me from Mrs. Randolph.

"Let them once have got the start by putting you on a wrong scent," said Mr. Neville, "and they would have managed matters without difficulty. They intend, I do not doubt, to take Mrs. Randolph to Cannes, or Nice, or some place of that kind, quite out of your beat."

Yes, without doubt such would have been their intention, but it must have been a difficult game to play, with Marietta as a necessary accomplice. That was the puzzle, and I could not solve it, neither could Mr.

Neville, and the more we talked, the more perplexed we were.

We sat on deck till it was dark. I was sufficiently at ease then to enjoy the view of the coast, and the range of mountains behind the Huerta of Valencia, looking purple and golden in the sunset. There were a good many people on board, all men, with the exception of a French lady; and a dinner was prepared for us all in the *salon*, about five o'clock; but by that time it was cold, and rough, and stormy, and I felt that it would be better to retire to the cabin for the night. The unhappy Frenchwoman was miserable and frightened, and begged to be allowed to stay with her husband in the *salon*. She was a very unfortunate traveller, and hated Spain with a most cordial hatred. She had lately been in the south, in Granada. Mr. Neville told her that he had intended going there himself, but had been prevented. "Ah!" she exclaimed, "you ought to go down on your knees, and thank God every day for a fortnight that you have been delivered from going to such a country."

In what the horrors consisted she did not state, and as the evening drew on, she had little consciousness of anything but present fear and misery.

I lay in my berth, listening to her lamentations in the adjoining *salon*, and trying, when I was not wretchedly ill, to sleep. It was really a miserable night; we had only a *garçon* to wait upon us, and the arrangements were, as they are in all Spanish matters,

entirely behind the world, and as uncomfortable as possible.

We landed at about eleven o'clock the next morning — Tuesday. A crowd of boats came round the vessel to take us on shore, and there was a great deal of rushing, pushing, and squabbling, and consequent delay. The *Ebro* had arrived about an hour before us, and I was very much afraid that our friends, or enemies — I don't know which to call them — might have gone on still farther immediately, but Mr. Neville was certain this could not be the case. Mrs. Randolph would assuredly require rest, and they would reckon that they had a whole day before them, since on the supposition that we had missed the *Catalan*, which they evidently took it for granted we should, it would have required at least forty hours to reach Barcelona from Valencia by Diligence. I tried to believe it all, but my heart beat very quickly, as we drove by the broad terrace, or rampart, the Muralla del Mar, which is the fashionable promenade of Barcelona, and turned into the Rambla, a great street, planted with trees, like the Boulevards of Paris, but wider and handsomer. Here was the Fonda de las Cuatro Naciones. Even in that short drive, I had felt somewhat cheered. The place was so very civilized and French. I felt more in the neighbourhood of friends than I had done since I left Pau.

Mr. Neville had left the carriage, and was inquiring about rooms, and I was watching with anxious eyes every one who passed up and down, when a gentle-

manly young Englishman turned into the hotel, when I recognised John Penrhyn. I jumped out of the carriage, stopped him, shook him heartily by the hand, said I know not what, expressive of the highest satisfaction, and was sobered by the grave face of Mr. Neville, who turned round on hearing my voice, and after finishing his conversation with the landlord, and giving the necessary orders, came up to John quite coolly, put his hand upon his shoulder, and said —

"Well, John, found at last!"

The young man drew back, looked confused, and stammered. I should have done the same, if I had had that stern eye fixed upon me.

"We can have rooms," said Mr. Neville to me.

"And they — are they arrived? are they here?" I asked.

"John will know," said Mr. Neville. "You are expecting Lady Chase and Baron von Bronnen, John. Where are they?"

"I am expecting no one," was the proud answer; "I am here by myself."

Mr. Neville looked angry, and I interposed. "If you know where they are," I said, "you will do us the greatest possible favour if you will tell us."

"I do know where Lady Chase is — in this hotel, with Mrs. Randolph and her niece. But I did not expect her or anyone. I have not seen Baron von Bronnen, and I do not choose to have assertions made about me which are untrue."

Mr. Neville took no notice of this remark: he

merely said to me, "If you will go to your room and rest, I will do all that is necessary, and come to you. John, you and I have a good deal to say to each other. Where shall I find you?"

"Here."

"And at what hour shall you be at leisure?"

"At whatever hour you choose."

"Very well. We shall meet at the *table d'hôte*, and I will see you afterwards."

John assented by silence.

I could not dispute the wisdom of this arrangement, though what I craved was at once to go to Marietta myself, and have an explanation of all that had happened, and hurry her back to the shelter of my protection. But Mr. Neville gave me no option. He had evidently quite decided what he should do, and he did not leave me a choice. John Penrhyn asked if he could do anything for me; but I saw that he was anxious to be off, and I said I was tired and wished to be left alone. So I was taken upstairs and installed in a comfortable room, furnished in the French style, and looking out upon the Rambla.

Mr. Neville was full of consideration for me, but his face was clouded. The sight of John Penrhyn had aroused some very painful thoughts. He told me that he should without delay see Lady Chase, and demand an explanation. If I would give him the commission, he would also insist upon an interview with Marietta. By this time she would have discovered the true character of the people she was with, and she would, no

doubt, at once place herself under my protection. Lady Chase I was quite willing he should see. She required to be confronted with a man; but Marietta I was doubtful about. If, as I felt sure must be the case, she was frightened and unhappy, she must be longing for me, and it would seem unkind in me not to go to her. But I yielded. Mr. Neville is just one of those men who has very little of a woman in him, and I think he doubted my discretion. Anyhow, he was resolved to manage it all himself; and so, after ordering me a basin of soup and a glass of wine, he went off on his errand.

He came back to me in an hour's time. His story was most wonderful. Lady Chase and Marietta had received him in the kindest, pleasantest way; they had expected him; they were delighted to see him, and charmed to hear I was arrived. Of course they supposed I should come by the *Catalan*, if I was too late for the *Ebro*. It had made them a little anxious, but now everything was right.

Mr. Neville explained how entirely we had been deceived, and Marietta was greatly distressed. She had written to me on the Sunday night, quite late, to say that some Spanish friends of Lady Chase had been so strongly recommending Barcelona instead of Malaga, that their plans were quite altered; and, as the Barcelona steamer was to sail on the same day as that for Malaga, it was only a question with me of taking a different route. She hoped I should not object to go with them. Silence was to be interpreted as acquies-

cence. She also said that she had despatched another note, the first thing in the morning, to which she had expected an answer, but not receiving any she had taken it for granted that all was settled, and that I should meet them on the quay, in time to start by the *Ebro*. Not finding me there, she was very uneasy; but as the *Catalan* was to sail almost at the same time, she comforted herself by the thought that I should follow in it, and that Mr. Neville would be with me to take care of me. It had all happened just as she expected, and now everything was delightful.

"But you told her," I said, "that I never received either of the notes."

"Oh yes! I told her: and she turned in astonishment to Lady Chase, who immediately exclaimed, 'Those Spaniards! they are never to be trusted. I gave such special orders.'"

"Those English and Germans, rather," I said. "One has no defence against falsehood; and this story, as far as Lady Chase is concerned, is false."

"It is a lie, an abominable lie!" exclaimed Mr. Neville. "And would you believe it? — when I reminded her that she had sent to tell you to be at the quay at three o'clock, too late for the *Ebro*, she said it must have been a mistake, she wrote so hurriedly!"

"And what is to be done now?"

"Stay and watch," he said, gloomily.

"But I cannot stay. I must go."

"Go! no, never," he exclaimed; "you cannot."

"But, if I must — if I have other duties? And it

is Marietta's own doing. Poor child! she has walked into the snare, and she will not see that she is in it."

He sat down, considering, I could see, anxiously. I had an impulse to speak — then I feared — then I thought again; at last I said, "She is very unprotected."

He looked up at me and answered very slowly, and in a voice which seemed choked with some inward burst of feeling, "Mrs. Anstruther, don't tempt me. It may be her misery and mine."

"Misery! — if you love each other?" I replied.

"But does she love me? Can she have thought of me? And, if she could love me — my dear friend" — he grasped my hand convulsively — "I have nothing to offer her. I am all but penniless."

And then the tears gathered in his eyes, and as the large drops rolled down his cheeks, the strong, brave-hearted, noble-minded man hid his face from me, and I stood by him, feeling — as a woman must feel when she sees a man in sorrow — an intense reverential pity.

"You mean," I said, after a pause, "that you have no present income which would support a wife; but you do not mean that you have no prospects."

"I mean," he answered, "that I thought once I should inherit a fortune, but that is gone by. I have only a mere trifle of my own, besides my college fellowship, which must cease when I marry, and the hope of what I may eventually make at the Indian Bar."

I was silent.

"You see," he said, looking at me anxiously, "it would not be fair, it would not do. We might be engaged, if — but it is folly talking of it; even now I believe she cares for Henry Anson."

"No, no," I exclaimed, "I assure you I have not the slightest doubt she is wholly indifferent to him."

"And you think — have you any idea? — is it possible there might be a chance for me?"

I knew I should chill him by my answer, but I was compelled to be cautious. "She has given me no reason to form any opinion about it, but I feel quite sure that she cares for no one else."

"It would not be fair," he again repeated, "it would be such a long engagement. I must leave her, and make my way before we could marry."

"She has a little money of her own," I replied.

"Don't tempt me, I entreat you, don't tempt me!" He started from his seat, and walked rapidly up and down the room.

It was the first time in my life that I had ever done or said anything definitely to further a marriage, and I shrank from the fearful responsibility, but I had a conviction that I was right, and I said, after a few moments' consideration, —

"Mr. Neville, there are some cases in which seeming imprudence is real prudence. I believe this is one. Marietta is to me as my own child, and I tell you truly that, taking you as you are, with scarcely any present

means, and with nothing to look to except your own exertions and her small income, I would, if it were in my power, give her to you, not only without hesitation, but with thankfulness."

He took my hand, but he could not speak, and he left me.

CHAPTER XVII.

Barcelona, Fonda de las Cuatro Naciones: December 24. — Little did I imagine that I should ever spend a Christmas eve in Barcelona. I feel now as if I should be prepared for spending the next at the Antipodes. It is all very strange, but the day brings many grateful thoughts, and a portion of the weight is off my mind. Mr. Neville has not ventured yet to speak to Marietta, but he is making his way; and I believe he will succeed. I do not repent what I have done, though I feel every hour more and more its importance.

I have seen Mrs. Randolph. Lady Chase has changed her tactics, and now interposes no obstacles; but that she is still a snake in the grass I do not for an instant doubt. Marietta came to me soon after Mr. Neville left me on Monday, and told me precisely what she had told him. The idea that there was any intention to deceive us seemed to her preposterous. She asked again and again what could be the motive. I really did not dare to suggest that it might be the desire to get hold of her apart from me, and prevent my interfering about the money. If I had done so, Marietta would have thought me worse than absurd; it would have seemed to her a mean idea suggested

by a mean mind. So I left it. I went to Mrs. Randolph for half an hour in the evening. Marietta was present the whole time. Mrs. Randolph looks, and is, very ill, but I believe she may linger for months, perhaps even for another year. She was as picturesquely "got up" as ever, and would have made a lovely picture for an artist. She thanked me warmly for bringing Marietta to her, and said what a delight it was to have her with her again. She had been very lonely lately.

I asked if Lady Chase was likely to remain with her, and if she herself intended to remain at Barcelona.

"Indeed, I do not know," was the answer; "I go on from day to day, doing just what I am told. And now my dear child is with me, I care little where I am."

Marietta looked grieved, but I could not help remembering that the "dear child" would have been with her for the last two years, only she preferred the society of that wretched Lady Chase. And yet she was not insincere at the moment — that is the strange thing about her: she really says what she means at the time, but then she means twenty different things in the course of the day. We talked upon indifferent subjects, and I brought forward the strange mistake (this is the only term I am permitted to use) which had nearly separated us. Mrs. Randolph took it very lightly, rather as a matter of interest than as involving any disquietude on my part, and Marietta said to me

afterwards, apologetically, that very little had been said to her about it; Lady Chase thought it so important to keep her mind quiet.

I asked when I might see Mrs. Randolph again, and was told, "Oh, any day, every day if she were well enough." And so for this any day or every day I must wait; unless — oh, if Mr. Neville could but bring his own affairs to a crisis! If Marietta would but accept him! It is impossible for me to stay long here, and I pine — no words can say how deeply — for home and my little ones. John Penrhyn went this morning: Mr. Neville sent him off. He came to see me for an hour last evening, and we had a singularly confidential talk. I think he takes to me — as people say — and I think too that Mr. Neville has been rather stern with him. He would be likely to be that. He has such a strong iron nature himself, he would have no sympathy for any admixture of weakness. And after all, from John's own account, the sin has not been very great. He met with Mrs. Randolph at Paris, and, from the old family connection, was a good deal with her. She was better then, and had some agreeable people at her house. At Biarritz they met again, and the Baron, who, I suppose, went there after we had seen him at Eaux-Chaudes, made his appearance. John knew nothing about him then, except that he was Lady Chase's half-brother, and that they were both intimate with Mrs. Randolph; so it seemed all right By degrees he was led into playing cards — not gambling at first, but it became gambling. Things

went on in the usual way, sometimes he lost, sometimes he won. Then John confesses that he was weak, and that although he felt himself entangled, he did not break off from the party at once, but consented to join himself with them, and go on with them to Madrid. He had always meant to go to Spain, and so it seemed to him that there was no reason against it.

I asked if he had been recalled to England then, and he said, "No; he received no English letters till he reached Madrid. Then his uncle wrote very sternly, saying, that he heard he was leading a disreputable life, and that if he did not return instantly, the consequences might be far graver than he anticipated."

"I knew well enough what that meant," said John; — "that I should not be his heir; and I was not going to be brow-beaten. I had done nothing disreputable, though I had lost a few pounds at cards, and I determined to show that I cared nothing for his paltry money. So I wrote back saying that the reports were false, and that I was going home by the south of Spain."

"But you did not go to the south," I said.

"No" — and he blushed a little, "I was a fool there. That scoundrel Von Bronnen took me in, and persuaded me to go to Valencia instead."

"Because he was going there?"

"Well, yes, partly. I was in his debt then fifty pounds, and I thought I might win it back. Don't be shocked. I was a fool, worse than a fool."

"Yes," I said, "you were: but what made you leave Valencia?"

"The Baron told me that Neville was on my track. Lady Chase found that out — at least she saw him in Madrid — and I knew well enough what he would be after, and I did not choose to be taken and carried back by him to England in disgrace. So I bolted, and meant to make my way home by myself, and tell my own tale."

"But why have you remained here?"

"Simply because Von Bronnen has been promising every day to write and make some arrangement about the payment of the money; and till that was settled I could not go."

"And he knows that you expect to be your uncle's heir?"

"Oh yes, he knows that; but he can't expect anything from it."

"Only that it may make you a more valuable prey," I said. "He is a sharper, nothing more or less; and if you have escaped from him by paying fifty pounds, you may consider yourself a very fortunate fellow."

"So Neville says. I wish he was not what he is."

"Who? Mr. Neville?"

"Yes; he aggravates me. I have behaved like a wretch, I know; but his coming after me maddens me. I ought to be grateful, and I am not."

"It is against his own interest," I said.

"Don't talk of it," he exclaimed; "it rings in my

ears night and day. I would give worlds never to have come in his way. He is the most noble, disinterested, generous fellow; — I ought to worship him, but he maddens me."

I tried to bring him to explain more clearly what he meant, but I could only gather that there is between them that kind of magnetic antagonism which can scarcely be accounted for rationally. Mr. Neville's rigid, and seemingly cold, uprightness of character, and John's impulsiveness, warmth — and it must, I suppose, be confessed, his moral weakness — cannot accord. And yet I feel convinced that, place John Penrhyn in a position of real trial, and he would come out nobly. He wants experience of his own infirmity of purpose, and a sufficient motive to lead him to struggle against it — the discipline of life, in fact. This would make him seek for the true aid. Religious feeling he already possesses, but it has not yet become religious principle: and so he makes me think of jelly — made of excellent materials, and put into a good mould, but still requiring something to render it firm and eatable.

Personally, he is most attractive to me. He is not regularly handsome, but his face is decidedly clever, the expression remarkably sweet, and his smile is fascinating. Then he has the charm of a perfectly easy, frank, yet very polished manner. He is extremely amusing, for he has a keen sense of the ludicrous, and is a capital, though really a very good-natured, mimic. I hear he sings well, and I know he sketches well. In

fact, he is just the young man to be spoilt by society, and the flattery he will receive as the heir to a good fortune.

We said good-bye with a very cordially expressed hope, on his part, that we might meet again. I reciprocated it, but with a mental reservation. Mr. Neville was greatly rejoiced when he saw him fairly off. It seemed hard to me not to be going with him — and, indeed, I had thought whether it would be possible; but I must see matters a little more advanced before I leave Marietta. My present idea is to stay a week or ten days longer here, and then to make my way to Paris, where Ina will, I hope, meet me. If she can find no friend for an escort, I shall beg Mrs. Strangways to put her under the charge of a confidential servant.

I insisted upon taking Marietta out a little to-day. Mr. Neville went with us. We lionised the cathedral, which has been a good deal spoilt, and went to the top of the tower. The view was regularly Spanish, over a cultivated plain, bounded by dreary hills, about seven hundred feet high, and washed by the Mediterranean. Barcelona itself is a very gay, bright town, entirely French. The people pique themselves upon their civilisation. The man who went to the top of the cathedral with us took especial pains to impress upon us that the Barcelonese had quite lost their taste for bull-fights. Here we have been able to buy photographs and stereoscopes, but they are all French. In fact, since I have been in Spain I have seen nothing

particularly Spanish, except the fans. I tried, when we were in Madrid, to find a few things which might serve for presents at home, but really there was nothing worth having. I did buy a little work-box, but it is so roughly and badly made, that I suspect it will come to pieces before I reach home. And it is the same with regard to books. There seems to be no Spanish literature, except "Don Quixote," which one does see occasionally, otherwise the booksellers' shops are crowded with French novels. I have remarked but one Spanish book advertised, — a history of the late Italian war; and that was placarded in large letters at the corners of the streets, both in Madrid and Valencia, as if the appearance of a new book was quite an event.

The Rambla is a fine street, on the outskirts of the town, and the walk by the sea — the Muralla del Mar — is delicious. But we are not seeing Barcelona in its ordinary guise, for at this festival time the people are bent on doing nothing, and there is scarcely anyone to attend to the shops. We did, however, see some sign of business at the Audiencia — a kind of court of justice — for there the notaries were writing at their desks in an open corridor, surrounding a court-yard, and men were walking up and down, and talking to one another in a fresh free way which made one sigh with envy when one thought of a London lawyer's chambers. I was less interested, however, in the sight-seeing than in the course of true love. Mr. Neville is terribly nervous, and when he is nervous he

is stiff; and Marietta was not her natural gay self. I left them as much as I possibly could together, making every excuse to walk and talk with the persons who showed us what there was to be seen; and I hope Mr. Neville made some use of his opportunities; but I saw no result, except that when we met at the *table d'hôte*, he ate nothing, and was very silent and stupid.

Barcelona: Christmas Day, Thursday. — Totally unlike Christmas Day. There was service at the consul's house, but no celebration of the Holy Communion. Mrs. Randolph was not so well, and Marietta would not leave her, and I was not allowed to see her. Mr. Neville went out with me in the afternoon, and we wandered all over the town and into the public gardens, returning by the Calle de Fernando, the business street, and the Muralla del Mar. I have more and more the impression that Barcelona is entirely a French town. We went again to the cathedral. The most charming thing to me about it is the beautiful Gothic cloister, with its faded frescoes and court of orange trees. We dined at the *table d'hôte*, ate an apology for English plum-pudding, and made acquaintance with some pleasant English people — a Mr. and Miss Baker — who are intending to stay at Barcelona another ten days, and then go straight to Paris. If I could accompany them it would be just what I should wish. I made Mr. Neville come to my room after dinner to talk over the plan. He is sadly discouraged by Marietta's manner, and says she is so reserved to him. I think too the old scruples linger.

He dreads asking her to share his poverty. I have told him that I cannot remain longer than the time I have named, and that I must try and see the consul, and find out through him some English person living in Barcelona to whom I may introduce Marietta, and who may be in some way a protection to her. Lady Chase still talks of going, but I have no faith in her words. What is become of the Baron I cannot say. Marietta knows nothing about him. At all events, before I leave, I must and will see Mrs. Randolph alone, and discuss with her the question of Marietta's money.

Friday, 26. — Mrs. Randolph better, and Marietta able to walk out with us. She promises, if possible, to go with us to-morrow to Montserrat. Lady Chase professes to be delighted to take care of her dear friend during Marietta's absence. I have written to Mrs. Strangways to say that Ina is to meet me in Paris, though I cannot as yet fix the day. It really does seem now as if I should soon leave Spain: and my heart rejoices, and then again it sinks. I dread the parting with Marietta, and home will be so changed, even though I shall have my darlings. I called on the consul, but he was absent from Barcelona, and not expected to return till Monday.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Saturday, 27. — We started for Montserrat at 7.25, which involved leaving the hotel at half-past six, and getting up not later than half-past five. I had ordered my breakfast the night before at six, intending to have it when I was dressed. The waiter — for there is no chamber-maid — brought it at five, in the usual foreign fashion, before I was out of bed, or at all prepared for it, and left it to get quite cold. I was resolved not to bear this, and, as soon as I could, I made my way along the dark corridor, and down two flights of stairs to some lower regions, where I found a stray waiter, and insisted upon it that the coffee should be made hot. Returning to my room, I met Mr. Neville, who told me, to my dismay, that Baron von Bronnen had arrived quite late the night before, and had taken rooms in the hotel.

"That poor child!" was my exclamation, and I stood for a moment in thought. Then I said plainly, "My good friend, there must be no longer any delay in this matter. Marietta in your hands will be secure of protection; otherwise, when I am gone, these people may at any moment carry her off with them again. You must try your fate." He just smiled — but that was all. I felt for him from the very bottom of my

heart. I was thankful I had no misgivings as to the right and wrong of the matter; for certainly I was taking a very decided part.

Marietta being with us, we had no opportunity for any private conversation afterwards. It was a cold, dreary beginning of a day of pleasure to drive through the empty streets before the break of dawn, and wait about at that most friendless of all places, a Spanish railway station; and I suspect we all rather regretted having left our comfortable beds so early. Certainly travellers should not choose the month of December for seeing Spain: there is no country which more requires sunshine. I felt this especially as the train passed through the environs of Barcelona, and turning away from the sea carried us on into the interior. Olives and ilex, bare rocks, and a dark yellowish grey soil, gave a sombre colouring to the landscape, which one could scarcely imagine to be brightened even in summer. We were at the station at Monistiol by nine o'clock; a little omnibus was waiting there to take us to the convent. A railway, an omnibus, and Montserrat! — a most unnatural combination; yet I should not have cared for that, if we had had a prospect of seeing anything; but the thickest of fogs covered the mountain. It was precisely opposite the station, so we were told, and very near, but not a trace of it was visible. There was nothing to be done, however, but to go on; so we took our places in the little vehicle with some peasants, and after a short drive to the village of Monistiol, at the foot of the mountain, we began to ascend. Clouds

still rested on the summit as we went up, but the plain below was clear, and gave us hope that we might not after all be so very unfortunate. The road wound gradually, not in and out amongst hollows of the mountain, but in zigzag cuts along one side. There were no very wonderful ravines or precipices till we neared the summit (or at least that which was the summit so far as the omnibus was concerned), and then we passed under a stupendous wall of rock, and almost immediately afterwards emerged from the dense fog into the most glorious sunshine. Such a sky! It surpassed — far surpassed — anything I had ever seen in Italy; and against the deep purple blue stood out gigantic pinnacles, and needles, and towers, and pyramids of pale grey stone, hundreds of feet high, rising jagged and sharp and glittering as if to pierce the sky. It was one of the sights to be treasured in memory as a subject for one's thanksgiving — something to live upon in future hours of loneliness and dreariness.

We left the wall of rock, turned a corner of the mountain, and found ourselves on the edge of a tremendously steep ravine, with the convent buildings close to us on our right, and leaving only sufficient space for the road along which we were passing. The convent is built on a narrow esplanade in the hollow of the mountain; the giant pinnacles and huge cliffs close round and protect it behind, and the deep gorge, through which the Llobregat flows, forms its defence in front. It must once have been a very handsome building, but its day of glory is past and it is now in

many parts dilapidated. Our hope and expectation had been to spend two or three hours in exploring not only the convent but the rocks and hermitages, so far as they are accessible; but, to our extreme disappointment, we found that the omnibus was to return almost immediately, in order to take back some travellers to the railway station, and that it would not come up again for us. The travellers were Spaniards, who had already spent some hours on the mountain, had seen all that was to be seen, and were impatient to depart. We did our very utmost to persuade them to wait another two hours, and so meet the next train, but their flinty hearts were not to be softened. We were allowed but one hour, and being unwilling to lose a minute of that short time, we hurried away under the guidance of a monk.

All this time, ever since we left Madrid, in fact, Mr. Neville had made himself as dull and disagreeable as a gentleman and a good man could do. I could not help thinking to myself that if he intended to win Marietta's heart, he certainly set about it in a very odd way. Marietta herself had flashes of enthusiasm and delight, especially when we first saw the mighty pinnacles against the blue sky, but they were only flashes. She was very sad at heart, and kept my hand in hers when we were together, pressing it fondly from time to time, and looking at me occasionally with the tears in her eyes, whilst she murmured, "If we could only have Ina here! and if we were not going to part!"

Not very promising that seemed for Mr. Neville!

And if he saw, or heard, or understood, his dulness was not to be wondered at.

The convent was soon seen. Ladies are, of course, only allowed a very cursory view; and, though the church was handsome, we were not particularly edified by the chief marvel — a Black Virgin, which, according to the legend, was hidden by the Goths in 717, to save it from the invading Moors; and, being afterwards miraculously discovered, has been ever since honoured by the richest gifts from kings and princes. What would have been really interesting to me would have been the mural inscription commemorating the fact that Ignatius Loyola watched before the Virgin previous to dedicating himself to her service; but I really did not know that the inscription was there at the time, and we were so sadly hurried we could not give our full attention to anything. A loss which I have felt ever since I came to Spain has been that of an English "Murray." Our French guide-book is very good of its kind, but it is not to be compared with "Murray." We hastened away from the church, and then — alas, for the infirmity of poor human nature! — we were obliged to think of having something to eat, for we were quite starved. A little soup, and some bread and cheese were provided for us in a kind of rough kitchen attached to the convent, and again we hurried off to see the view from the monks' garden immediately under the precipitous rocks. I was a little tired then, and inclined to sit still, and rest in the sunshine, and think. What one needs on

these occasions is less to see than to feel, and feeling is impossible when one is rushing about from one wonder to another without a moment's interval for reflection. Mr. Neville did the first sensible thing he had done that day, he urged Marietta to go with him round the head of the ravine, so as to get the view of the convent from the other side. There was a decided hesitation in her manner — I could scarcely call it reluctance; but her colour came and went quickly, and she looked to me as if to give her permission. I begged them to go and leave me, only reminding them that they must not go far, lest they should be late for the omnibus, and so they departed.

And then I thought, not of the monks and the convent, and Ignatius Loyola and the Black Virgin, not even of the rocks and precipices, and the cloudless sky, but of what I should do when I had to return home without Marietta; — how lonely Ina would be, — what an aching void there was in my own heart! what a longing I had to see my precious Cecil! And at length I started up, nervously anxious lest we should be late, still more nervous lest I should interrupt Mr. Neville just when he had worked himself up to say what I felt sure, if he had a grain of sense or courage left, he would take the opportunity of saying; and most nervous of all lest I should have been exciting false hopes, and Marietta should really be — what I knew it was quite possible, and indeed very likely, she might be — indifferent to, if not quite afraid of him.

I left the monks' garden, passed through the outbuildings of the convent into the courtyard, and saw the omnibus standing there, the Spaniards talking to the driver, who was preparing to put his horses to the little vehicle. There was no time to be lost. Crossing the head of the ravine, I followed a winding path among roots and brushwood, leading along the slope of the precipice. The tremendous gorge, dark and wooded, lay below. It opened wide at a little distance, and beyond lay a long reach of purple distance. I could not but pause for one moment to gaze, for it was wonderfully beautiful, and a pang went to my heart as I thought it was the first and last time I should ever look upon it; but as I moved on a few steps in order to be able to see round a projecting point, I caught sight of Marietta and Mr. Neville, and the one glance put every thought unconnected with them to flight.

It was done, and all was well! I knew it by the way in which Marietta's hand rested in his, whilst her eyes were bent upon the ground, and a smile of intense loving trustfulness rested on her face. And he? I really cannot describe the change which in those short minutes had come over him. It was a kind of transfiguration. There was a wholly different expression of countenance and manner — a brightness which, in its perfect happiness, had something in it scarcely belonging to this world. They looked round as I drew near, and Marietta blushed painfully, and had an impulse to withdraw her hand; but Mr. Neville kept it,

and as I came up to him he laid it in mine, and said —

"You will give your child your blessing. She does not know how to be happy without it."

I put my arm round her, and drew her to my heart. "God bless you, darling!" I said; "it is all that I have wished."

"And is it all right?" asked Marietta, smiling through a mist of happy tears. "I have been afraid ——"

"Of what?" I said. "Of doing what every one who cares for you will rejoice at from the very depths of the heart?"

The words had scarcely escaped me when I thought of Mr. L'Estrange.

Marietta's quick eye saw there was a thought unexpressed. She urged me to tell it. Was it wrong? Could it be wrong? Was there anyone who could think it so?

"Only Henry Anson," said Mr. Neville, a little gravely.

"And he had his fate settled before he left Madrid; was it not so, Marietta?" I inquired.

The poor child coloured at the question, and made no reply; and I cared for the Rector too much to allude to him, and went on in front to avoid any more questioning.

Happy as we were, we were all — at least, if I may judge from myself — excessively awkward and uncomfortable, and felt glad that the narrowness of the

path prevented the necessity of continuing the conversation. Mr. Neville and Marietta to the last moment stood together looking into the ravine. They forgot me; they forgot also cloaks, and shawls, and guide-book, and the little painted ivory tabernacle which had been bought from the old monks, containing within it a rosary of garnets, and a tiny medal of the Black Virgin. I had to think of everything, and I was only too glad to do so. I made Marietta mount the *banquette* in front of the little omnibus. I intended to have made Mr. Neville take his seat by her, whilst I went in the inside, but they would not hear of this, so room was found for me on the same bench; and in this most unromantic way we descended the mountain.

The fog had quite vanished by this time, and a vast extent of landscape lay open to our view — a panorama extending from the Pyrenees to the Mediterranean. That sounds very beautiful, and it was beautiful; but not because Spain is a beautiful country, and we looked down upon towns, and villages, and woods; for the trees were grey olives and dark firs, and the land in this wintry season was brown with tillage, or else tossed about in what looked like mounds of rock and sand thrown up by an earthquake. The extent and the colouring made it striking; but Mr. Neville and I agreed that it would be a hopeless country to have anything to do with. The real charm to me lay in the magnificent mountain, rising abruptly from the plain with its pinnacles of rock, its mighty walls, and deep ravines. The long snowy line of

the Pyrenees looked and felt quite home-like when I thought that Pau lay beyond them. It was cold on the mountain, but not bitterly so, and we were back again at Barcelona by six. We should have been earlier, but these Spanish railways have as yet only one line, and we were obliged to wait at a station till a train from Barcelona could pass us, and this delayed us twenty minutes or half an hour. The *table d'hôte* dinner was, fortunately, over, and we had a pleasant little meal by ourselves; and, by a kind of mutual consent, put aside all prospects of difficulty, all thoughts of parting, and agreed to be very happy.

But when dinner was over and Marietta had gone to her aunt, Mr. Neville came to my room, and we had a long talk about past, present, and future. We came to no definite conclusions, for I felt that I must have time to think over everything by myself.

CHAPTER XIX.

Sunday, 28. — I have felt more thankful than I can say for to-day's rest and quiet, and the Church service at the consul's house, though it was shortened in a most unsatisfactory manner. I sat down to think afterwards with the conviction that I should be guided to a right judgment. After grave consideration I arrived at a result which Mr. Neville suggested last night, and which I, in my secret heart, agreed to, though I did not choose to own it till I had thought the matter over alone. Marietta must be married at once. If I could stay here it might be possible to delay, though even then Lady Chase and this odious Baron might at any moment bring us into difficulties. But as the case stands — as I really must return home as soon as possible — it is indispensable that Marietta should be left under safe protection. If she were not married, the fact of her engagement would render her position even more awkward than it is at present. I felt we should have some difficulty in bringing her round to our ideas, and I told Mr. Neville so when he came to my room after luncheon; but circumstances favoured us.

Marietta had hitherto seen little or nothing of the Baron; he has advisedly kept in the background. But

to-day, by a most happy accident (if one may so call it), she has been a little enlightened as to his communications and understanding with Lady Chase, and the influence they both have over her aunt has frightened her considerably.

It seems — so she told us when she found her way to my room just before dinner — that Lady Chase yesterday, whilst Marietta was away, took the opportunity to suggest another move. Delicious as the climate of Barcelona is — warm, yet fresh and inspiriting — Mrs. Randolph has not rallied, and, as it is my firm conviction, is not likely to rally. Lady Chase has proposed Algeria, and Mrs. Randolph, clinging to anything which gives hope of a change for the better, has, with her usual excitement and impatience, caught at the idea, and is now, as Marietta expresses it, wild to be off immediately.

They know full well that it is impossible for me to follow them to Algeria, and they do not suspect that Mr. Neville is interested in their affairs, except as they before concerned John Penrhyn, and as they now concern me; and so they believe that we shall both go back to England together, and that, once in Algeria, they shall be able to carry out their schemes without interruption. Marietta says that she brought forward all the objections possible — the fatigue of another move, the expense, the distance, the uncertainty as to whether the climate would be of use, — but it was all of no avail; nd when she asked how they were to make the arrangements for the journey and to

secure apartments, she was told by Lady Chase that a gentleman, a friend of hers, was prepared to do everything for them; in fact, it was possible that they might all form one party. Who this gentleman was was kept a mystery.

Marietta believed the Baron had gone from Valencia back to Madrid, and did not know of his arrival here (we forgot to mention it yesterday) till, to her surprise and annoyance, she met him this afternoon in the hotel. Naturally, then she put two and two together, and asked her aunt the plain question, "Was he the person intended?" Mrs. Randolph could not deny it. She has not yet attained Lady Chase's facility of telling lies with an unblushing face. And then Marietta says that she gave her opinion very plainly — so plainly, indeed, that Mrs. Randolph went off into one of her old fits of passion, became utterly exhausted, and, in fact, has gone back many degrees in consequence.

Marietta blames herself; and yet, as she says, how could it have been avoided? To go to Algeria and make one party with Lady Chase and Baron von Bronnen! — it could not be; and yet to leave her poor dying aunt, to disregard her uncle's last injunction — that also could not be. She came to me in the greatest distress. Her engagement seemed only to render everything more complicated and to make her more unhappy. She must, she said, be separated from Mr. Neville; it would be impossible that it should be otherwise.

I said directly, "Why, my child, must you be separated from Mr. Neville?"

She looked at me in astonishment. "I cannot keep him here. He must go to England — to India — I don't know where."

"Neither do I know where, without you," I said. "Only consent to give him the full right to protect you, and all will be easy."

"But it could not be so quick! It is out of the question. And he would take me away from my aunt. Oh no! I must attend to duty before happiness."

"My dear Marietta," I said, "you must allow me to be plain with you in this matter. Your temptation is an unreasonable Quixotic view of self-sacrifice which will end in sacrificing others. You have a real duty to Mr. Neville, and you are bound to remember it, even though it should secure your own happiness. He can not leave you alone with these people, neither can I; but, as we are now placed, neither of us can really interfere to protect or advise: so that we are in a most awkward dilemma. Consent to marry at once, and Mr. Neville will have an authority which will enable him to assist you, and, in doing this, to assist your aunt. You must be as well aware as I am, that the one essential thing is to remove her from the influence of these wretched people. When he is your husband that will soon be managed."

"She will not consent," said Marietta.

"Then, my dear; if she will not consent, it is absolutely necessary that you should give her up."

"I could not; it would be impossible. My promise to my uncle—"

"Never involved that you were to live with your aunt, or to be with her, if she chose to have disreputable friends. Remember it was the one point on which he himself was firm."

I paused, for I saw that this last suggestion had been effective.

"But if I were married I must leave her," said Marietta.

"No, my love, that is precisely what you must not do, at least, not necessarily. Mr. Neville said to me, only last night, that if he could persuade you to marry at once he would remain here for another six weeks, or even two months; and then, if necessary, he would take you and Mrs. Randolph to Cannes or Pau, go himself to England, and settle himself to his business in London. He must be called to the Bar immediately, for he has no time to lose. In the summer Mrs. Randolph would, he hopes, be able to return to England; her future must then be left. It would be simple folly — it would be actually wrong — to sacrifice the happiness of two lives — your own and Mr. Neville's — to any supposed duty to Mrs. Randolph."

"If I did not long for it so much," said Marietta with a sigh, "it would be easy."

"My dear child," I said, a little impatiently, "there is such a thing as common sense, but really now and then it seems to me you forget it. Because one longs for a thing it is not necessarily sinful. Of course you

will be very thankful to be married; you have been so tossed about the world that, putting aside affection, it will be a haven of rest to you. And as regards deciding in favour of one's own inclinations, just see what I am doing now. I tell you candidly that if I can see you Mr. Neville's wife before I leave Barcelona" (Marietta started) — "yes," I continued "before I leave Barcelona, I shall be relieved from a very great perplexity. I know I have a personal interest in what I am urging, yet I have not the slightest hesitation in urging it. I have tried all my life to be honest with myself, and so now I venture to trust myself, and I am sure you can do the same. It is right and best that you should marry at once — as soon as possible. And now I shall send Mr. Neville to plead his own cause."

She caught my hand, trying to stop me, but I would not be prevailed upon; and I went directly to Mr. Neville's room, and told him that I had made the way clear for him. He went to Marietta immediately. I had my walking-dress on, and in order to be out of the way for a little while I thought I would go out; I should be unnoticed in the crowded Rambla, and I might even go as far as the Muralla del Mar.

Before I came to Spain I had been told that a lady could not venture to walk alone; but since I had been at Barcelona I had found that at my age it was quite practicable. At Madrid, Marietta and I were indeed one day followed by some little boys who, because we wore black Shetland veils, called after us, "*Mascarita!*

mascarita!" — a proceeding which did not at all surprise me. But at Barcelona, even when I was by myself, I was only stared at a little, because I was a foreigner. No other notice was taken of me; and I sat down on a bench overlooking the sea, and began to think over what I had just done. In spite of my assertion of confidence in my own honesty of purpose, I must confess that I felt a little self-distrust. I did not, indeed, really doubt that I had acted rightly in the matter, but I pictured to myself Marietta's future, and the possibility that after all Mr. Neville might not make her happy. She might in that case fairly reproach me for having hurried her on without giving her time for consideration. It was a very grave responsibility. But then, on the other hand, Marietta had voluntarily engaged herself: there was no pressure used on that point. She had seen as much of Mr. Neville as the generality of girls do of the men they marry. She evidently preferred him and his poverty to young Anson and his inheritance, and her choice was unquestionably to be approved. I could not doubt Mr. Neville's goodness. The high character which the world gave him had been confirmed by my own close observation; and as to his stiffness and severity of manner, that was a matter of taste. If Marietta did not object to it, no one else had a right to consider it an objection. No, I had done wisely. I had nothing to reproach myself with. But what would the world say?

That is a question which one is bound to consider

in cases of taste and external propriety; but I don't feel one need trouble oneself much about it when the happiness of life is concerned; and if I had had any lingering doubt as to the wisdom of the marriage I think it would have been put to flight, at least for the present, by the appearance of Baron von Bronnen lounging along the promenade with a cigar in his mouth, and accompanied by a companion as unpleasant-looking as himself. My impulse was to move away, but I felt that would be cowardly; so I continued gazing over the wall upon the ships which crowded the harbour. I felt him approach, though I did not actually see him. He came up to me by himself; his friend lingered at a little distance. He spoke courteously: but when I looked round, and saw him glaring at me, I trembled all over.

"I did not expect to see you here, madam," he said, meaningly.

"Neither did I expect to be here, Monsieur le Baron," was my reply.

"You came, I think, with Mr. Neville?"

"Yes, I came with Mr. Neville. When we found that Mrs. Randolph had changed her mind and was not going to Malaga, we thought it right to follow her."

"Oh! Mr. Penrhyn is gone, I believe?"

"Yes, he is gone."

"To England?"

"I cannot say for certain."

"But you think it probable?"

"If you wish to know Mr. Penrhyn's movements," I said, "you will do well to inquire of Mr. Neville."

"You can be cautious, I see," he replied, fiercely; "and no doubt, also, you can keep a secret, especially when you know how much depends upon it."

"Yes," I said, "I can keep a secret; and, Monsieur le Baron, I can also reveal one. I told Mr. Neville that Mr. Penrhyn was at Barcelona."

I spoke boldly, but I am sure I must have turned pale, for I was terribly frightened.

"You did?" he muttered between his teeth.

"Yes," I said, "I did. You extorted a promise from me by fear, and when you ventured to tell a lie in my presence, I felt myself released from it. Mr. Penrhyn is now beyond your reach, and whatever communication you have to make must be made to his cousin, Mr. Neville, who will remain here probably for some weeks."

An oath escaped the Baron's lips.

"And this is your doing?" he said.

"Partly, not entirely."

"And you call yourself a lady — a woman of honour!"

"More truly, I hope, Monsieur, than you can call yourself a gentleman of honour," was my reply.

He bit his lips, turned away for an instant, and then, coming back, said,

"You shall rue this."

"Very possibly I may," I said, quietly. "That is not a matter which troubles me now. I am no longer

without a friend. You cannot again frighten me by threats. I would advise you rather to look to yourself."

"What do you mean? I insist upon knowing." He came up quite close to me. I rose and walked very slowly away, keeping amongst the crowd on the Muralla, and then turning into the Rambla. The man followed me for a few paces, but, as I drew near the hotel, he rejoined his companion.

Of course he is a coward, as well as a bully, and I have alarmed him; but this renders it still more important that Mr. Neville should at once come forward and declare his true position with regard to Marietta. He will then be able to take the upper hand; and I cannot but think that these wretched people would, in that case, succumb and give up their pursuit of poor Mrs. Randolph and her money. As for myself, I am ashamed to feel how brave I can be now that I have Mr. Neville at hand to support me. I know I was bold and outspoken to-day. And I feel, too, that I have no dread of the Baron's revenge; but I do not therefore give myself the least credit for bravery. Put me back at Valencia, and I should be just as great a coward as I was before. My one comfort is, that I told the man what I did, and did not leave him to find it out. That has brought back a little of my self-respect, which, I confess, has been very uncomfortably lessened by the events of the last ten days.

I found Mr. Neville and Marietta still talking together when I reached my own room. The opportunity

of a private conversation had been very enticing; and I suspect they had been led on to many other subjects besides that for which the interview had been originally proposed. How that had been settled I saw at once. I looked at them, and laughingly asked, —

"Well, is the day fixed?"

And then Marietta began scolding me, and declared they could not at all agree; whilst Mr. Neville said it was a question for the consul, but it was certainly to be early in the next week. I praised them for having made the best use of their time, and begged them now to give their attention to me, whilst I related my interview with the Baron.

It was the first time Marietta had heard of his conduct to me, and the impression made upon her worked well for my wishes. She had always shrunk from him, now she dreaded him, and felt quite as strongly as we could that everything must be done to separate him and his sister from Mrs. Randolph. We talked a long time, and, upon the whole, fairly to the purpose; for we ended by agreeing that the engagement should instantly be announced, and that, if possible, the marriage should take place on Tuesday week. It seems alarmingly rapid, but the Bakers leave Barcelona on the following Wednesday, and I must go with them, or I shall be obliged to travel alone. I shall be able to make arrangements now to meet Ina in Paris. As for news from home, I don't expect any, or see, indeed, how it is possible to have any. This marriage

will be a thunderbolt to Ina. I must write to her to-day.

Monday, December 29. — The announcement is made; Marietta told her aunt this morning: she did not venture to do so yesterday, Mrs. Randolph was so unwell. It has been taken strangely, and yet, I think, in a way we might have anticipated if we had only considered Mrs. Randolph's character. She is excited, as a child might be with a new plaything. She thinks neither of right nor wrong; she does not look to the future; she makes no inquiry as to ways and means; she is simply amused and pleased at the idea that her niece is to be married. It would have been different, probably, if it had been proposed for Marietta to leave her. Her selfishness would have come in then, but as it is, she says the plans are all delightful, and she shall get quite well and return to England, and then she can live close to her dear niece, and perhaps the tiresome old great-uncle will let her have her precious Victor with her. Lady Chase is sullen and silent. The Baron keeps in the background. If there was the very faintest possibility of being able to interpose obstacles and objections, I do not doubt they would be raised; but Mr. Neville and Marietta are both of them completely independent; there is not a single person to say them nay. The fight will begin after the marriage. At present Mr. Neville is content to let things go on in the old way; he does not presume to interfere in Mrs. Randolph's arrangements, and any suggestion of a move would now be negatived at once by Mrs. Ran-

dolph herself, who is working herself up into a fever of interest in the preparations for the event. The mere fact of this operates against Lady Chase's influence, and so far it is a great gain. But poor Mrs. Randolph will suffer for it afterwards, and she is very ill. For her there is a far more important event than marriage gathering in the near distance. And how little she thinks of it!

CHAPTER XX.

Thursday, *January* 1; 18.. A new year! It seems like a new epoch in life, and much of the past has absolutely ended with the old year. I quite well remember looking forward from last New Year's day with the thought that everything was peaceful and bright, and that there seemed very little to dread, and yet with somewhat of misgiving, arising from the very fact that there were no clouds in the horizon. It was too clear for security. And what changes and trials have come! Yet everything which concerns myself is secondary at this moment: I think of no one but Marietta. She is extremely happy; calmer, quieter than usual; but so perfectly contented, it is a rest even to look at her. But I have not been resting much physically, for I have been hunting for an *appartement* with Mr. Neville. He proposes moving into it directly, and taking Mrs. Randolph with him. It will be a less expensive proceeding than living at an hotel, and it will at once sever the link between Mrs. Randolph and Lady Chase. I don't think the latter was at all prepared for the idea, and when she heard of it she raised innumerable objections. I was amused and edified by the quiet way in which Mr. Neville put them all aside by merely saying that it must be, that Marietta had come to Spain

to take care of her aunt and nurse her, and therefore her home must be Mrs. Randolph's. He really scarcely gave poor Mrs. Randolph any option in the matter; and I thought at first she would have resisted, especially when Lady Chase argued the point before her. But she is now too weak to exert herself in the way of opposition, and Mr. Neville is one of those men whom no woman would wish to oppose, if she could help it.

Marietta, though, does oppose him, playfully and prettily, and carries her own point whenever she wishes it. Mr. Neville wished to find rooms in a quiet street; Marietta insisted upon being, if possible, in the Rambla, because she thinks it will amuse her aunt: and we have engaged a pleasant comfortable suite of apartments at the lower end of the Rambla, with a quiet bedroom for Mrs. Randolph, which is the great *desideratum*. I really believe she is as well here as she could be anywhere. The climate is charming. A French physician attends her, but neither he nor anyone can do much for her, except relieve symptoms. Marietta sighs for the day when she can have her quite to herself, and try to turn her thoughts to something better than all these little excitements.

Saturday, January 3. — A great effort has been made to work upon Mrs. Randolph's feelings, and induce her to break off from Marietta, and attach herself wholly to Lady Chase. I rather expected something of the kind when I found that Lady Chase and the Baron still lingered in Barcelona, though professing to have business which would take them away. Yesterday

Mr. Neville persuaded Marietta and myself to go with him to Monjuich, a hill near the city which commands a magnificent panorama. Mrs. Randolph seemed a little better, and Marietta had been in such close attendance upon her aunt, that it was really necessary to take the opportunity of giving her a little change and fresh air. I should have been more averse to leaving Mrs. Randolph, but that Sophie, the French maid, is entirely in our interests, and has an extreme dislike to Lady Chase, and has been so rejoiced at the prospect of a change of dynasty that I felt she would keep a good watch during our absence.

We were only absent a couple of hours, but when we came back we found poor Mrs. Randolph in a very excited state of mind, exhibiting itself in a mixture of passion, hysterics, and reproaches. Lady Chase had been with her, and had persuaded her to believe that Mr. Neville and I had some sinister motive for hurrying on the marriage; that Marietta was deceived, and would be made miserable for life; that it was her duty to interfere, if possible, to stop the marriage, at any rate to delay it; that nothing but a removal to Algeria would save her own life; that — in fact, we had a most painful scene, and Marietta was so wretched and frightened, and so especially afraid that by carrying out our plans in opposition to Mrs. Randolph we might really endanger her aunt's life, that I was seriously uneasy lest Mr. Neville's feelings should be wounded. He is by no means an unexacting lover; he requires great devotion. He cannot understand that any claim should

in the slightest degree interfere with his own; and Marietta, with her womanly tenderness for her aunt, and her over-scrupulous conscience, often talks as if Mrs. Randolph had still the right to her first attention. But on this occasion I must say Mr. Neville behaved extremely well. He bore patiently with Mrs. Randolph, and soothed Marietta, and at length, to my great satisfaction, took the upper hand, just as if he had been already Marietta's husband, and said decidedly that Lady Chase could no longer be allowed to have any intercourse with Marietta, and Mrs. Randolph must take her choice: either she must at once leave Barcelona with Lady Chase and never see her niece again, or she must consent to give up Lady Chase as a friend. He said this in Marietta's presence and mine. Marietta trembled all over, and I thought she would have burst forth with some ejaculation which would have ruined all: but I kept her hand in mine and whispered, "Silence, patience, dear child; she must and will give in;" and, after a passionate burst of tears, Mrs. Randolph yielded, and Mr. Neville left us to find Lady Chase, and give her his opinion as to her conduct, and communicate the decision at which we had all arrived. He did not come back for some time: when he did it was with the rejoicing news that the Baron and his sister were to start at eight o'clock that very evening for Gerona.

Lady Chase was to be permitted to say farewell to Mrs. Randolph, but only in Marietta's presence and mine.

How this departure had been purchased I had no

suspicion at the time, but it has come out since in the course of conversation. Mr. Neville has paid John Penrhyn's debt — if debt it can really be called, when it was the result, I have not the slightest doubt, of dishonourable trickery. Mr. Neville says himself that he has only advanced the money, that John Penrhyn is certain to repay it, but it may be a long time first. The young man is at this moment entirely dependent on his uncle, and his allowance is only sufficient for his ordinary expenses. At any rate Mr. Neville has put himself to great inconvenience, and I can quite estimate what he has done, though he speaks so lightly of it to Marietta that I really do not think she fully understands it.

The parting between Lady Chase and Mrs. Randolph was short, and on Mrs. Randolph's side touching. She does actually care for this woman, who has always shown her what is called kindness; and I am sure it brought before her the precarious state of her own health. For the first time she alluded to the probability that she might never recover. Marietta was cold and distant. I merely bowed; it was all very awkward and disagreeable, and very sad, even hard for Mrs. Randolph, but what could have been done differently? In going to my room afterwards, I came suddenly upon the Baron. He stopped, scowled at me, and said in a meaning tone: "Madam, we shall meet again." It sounded very alarming, but when I mentioned it afterwards to Mr. Neville, he laughed and said: "Oh! yes, no doubt he scowls and threatens, he can do nothing

else, but he is the most arrant coward in Christendom; and so well known in England that he dares not show his face there, so you may feel quite safe."

Very rational, very true. But still I devoutly hope I never may meet him again.

Monday, *January* 5.—A most busy day. We have been moving into the new *appartement* in the Rambla, Mrs. Randolph, Marietta, and the maid. It has been a serious affair. Happily, the sun shone, and it was one of Mrs. Randolph's good days, so that we managed it better than could have been expected; but the luggage which Mrs. Randolph carries about with her is something wonderful. Poor Mr. Neville! I am not quite sure that he has yet faced the fact that he is marrying the aunt as well as the niece. I have been engaged also with my own little packings: for the Bakers and myself have arranged to go to-morrow evening to Gerona (which is as far as the railway is as yet completed), sleep there, and proceed the next day by Diligence to Perpignan. From thence I go direct to Paris, where Ina is to meet me. That sounds all pleasant enough, and I shall be rejoiced, no words can say how rejoiced, to be out of Spain. But to-morrow also I must part from Marietta. She and Mr. Neville go for the one day to Manresa, so that I shall not see them again. How great the wrench is, and what Dernham will be without Marietta, I do not let myself think. I have had a letter from Ina, full of surprise, and regret, and affection, but yet not quite, not entirely, what I had anticipated. She says, "how I shall miss darling

Marietta! how terrible it will be to be without her!" But in the next sentence she goes off into an account of a delightful expedition to Orthez, which most unfortunately Mr. Anson could not join because Sir John had summoned him to England. I am not sure whether my little Agnes will not, after all, be the greatest sufferer from the change in our once bright home.

I have had a conversation with Mr. Neville about that very sublunary, but very necessary, matter of consideration — money. He has been extremely anxious to have everything done regularly and legally, but this has been difficult. With the consul's aid he has, however, managed fairly well. His one great desire has been that Marietta's little fortune should be settled entirely upon herself, that he should have no control over it, except so far as having a life interest in it. They will begin house-keeping, or rather *appartement*-keeping, with about 450*l.* per annum, including in this Mr. Randolph's legacy; not a fortune, but they can live upon it, and Mr. Neville must get on in his profession. The question concerning Marietta's legacy he will now manage himself, and will do it much better than I could, and this is a great relief. Whenever I am inclined to have the slightest doubt about the marriage I comfort myself by thinking that if it were Agnes instead of Marietta I should be thoroughly satisfied, more so to-night than I have been at all; for, after we had discussed worldly matters, we got upon more serious subjects, and Mr. Neville came out more unreservedly than I have ever known him. He

is a man whose religion is shown much more by deeds than by words. He has a shrinking dislike to many of the *Shibboleths* which are adopted by the religious world — as it is called — and he keeps his deeper feelings upon all subjects very much to himself. But I felt what he was at the time of Mr. Randolph's death, and since I have been in Spain, and we have been thrown more together, and under circumstances which would have been a test of any man's religious feeling, I have been more and more convinced that the real root of all this strictness of his, is higher than mere morality. To-night we wandered on in our conversation far into the future — not the unknown, but the known, which must come to all. Mrs. Randolph's condition and her state of mind could scarcely fail to bring it before us, and, as Mr. Neville said, marriage in itself, if it is anything, is the beginning of an Eternity, the seal of a love over which time can have no power; and so it must bring solemn thoughts. Marietta came to us just at last, when her aunt was gone to bed, and prevented us from becoming too grave. Tears and smiles succeed each other with her so rapidly that we, undemonstrative English, can scarcely help being amused with her, even in our most serious moments. I watched her to-night as she was talking to Mr. Neville, sitting on a low stool at my feet, and holding his hand caressingly; and wondered in my own mind whether any English girl could ever have suited him as well. I doubt it. He wants to be helped forward in affection as much as any man I ever

saw, and yet he would be utterly revolted at anything like forwardness in a woman. It is Marietta's exquisite simplicity, and transparent truthfulness, and the conviction that there is nothing hidden, nothing intentional in anything she does or says, that makes one delight in an absence of reserve which, in another case, one might really find fault with. Oh dear! how terribly I shall miss her!

CHAPTER XXI.

Tuesday, January 6. — Marietta's wedding day. The great event is over. I must write it, though I have not a minute to spare.

We were at the consul's house this morning at half-past ten. The ceremony was to take place in the room fitted up as a chapel. The Bakers and myself were the only persons invited to be present, besides the consul and his wife, and Mrs. Watts, the wife of Mr. Watts the clergyman. Miss Baker was bridesmaid. Marietta wore a light lilac silk and a white bonnet; she had to start for Manresa immediately after the ceremony; and even if she had wished it there would have been no time to make any change in her dress. Romance, I am afraid, would have been shocked at us all: we were obliged to be so very matter of fact in all our arrangements. Italian excitement was under the pressure of the moment subdued by Marietta's English self-control. She only looked very pale, and the mists which occasionally gathered over those wonderful deep dark eyes of hers showed an intensity of feeling; but we had no actual tears. She went through all the legal part of the affair, knowing just what she was to do, and I looked at her handwriting afterwards, and saw only a very faint indication of

nervousness. Her voice was firm and distinct when she was called upon to answer in the service. Mr. Neville was more outwardly moved than she was; his lips were quite white, and his voice once faltered, but when the service was over it was all different.

He was himself then again, supremely happy, thoughtful, energetic. Marietta kept up bravely till we had gone back to the new *appartement* in the Rambla. It was only when she went to the room with me alone, after having shown herself to Mrs. Randolph, that she entirely broke down. We were to part, and when should we meet again? In the midst of all our fears, and hopes, and business, lately we have had very little time to face the answer to this question, and when Marietta put it to me in a voice choked with sobs, it gave me great pain.

But we have left it, — both of us. It is all in God's hands. The dear child is gone. I gave to her my last kiss, and to Mr. Neville my last most hearty grasp of the hand, and stood and watched the carriage as it drove down the Rambla to the railway station, and then I went back to my room at the Cuatro Naciones, feeling more entirely lonely and sad at heart than I can attempt to describe in words. And now I must put up my Journal and finish my packing, and prepare for leaving Spain.

Paris, Hôtel de Londres: January 12. — Once more with Ina, and on my way to England. We go straight through to Folkestone to-morrow. It has been a trying meeting for us both, but we have had so much to say

to each other, and our interests and sympathies are so entirely one, that there has been great comfort in it. Ina looks very much better than when I left her at Pau, and except when we talk of the past she has greatly recovered her spirits. The relief I feel myself at being out of Spain is even greater than I anticipated. I seemed to breathe more freely when we had crossed the frontier. The travelling was not unpleasant, though we had a cold four hours' journey to Gerona the evening of January 6; and found but indifferent accommodation in a large old-fashioned rambling Spanish inn, where they gave us but little to eat, and where the mulled wine which we ordered was undrinkable. I had a bed like a board, a pillow like a stone, and a kind of straw mattress for a counterpane, which kept slipping off all the night. Altogether a most uncomfortable experience.

The next morning we had just time to see the cathedral, which is very handsome, built of dark stone, with a superb flight of steps leading up to it. The Gothic arcade of the clerestory is beautiful, and there are good pictures and painted windows; upon the whole, it was well worth seeing. We just looked into a Byzantine church, dedicated to some saint whose name I had never before heard, and found there some reverend old monks and priests at their devotions — quiet and intent as if there were no such things as railways and diligences in existence; and then we rushed away from them, and were just in time to start for Perpignan in the diligence. Mrs. and Miss Baker and I had the

coupé, and were very comfortable. Mr. Baker mounted to the *banquette*. We had very pretty and often striking scenery the whole way; mountains in the distance, outliers of the Pyrenees, the highest covered with snow — the nearer hills picturesque; groves of olive and cork trees — rivers with sandy, stony beds; more cultivation and signs of life than in other parts of Spain. The colouring was lovely, especially towards evening. We passed through one really large town, Figueras, a frontier town (one notices and remembers large towns in Spain, they are so few and far between), and after that we ascended a spur of the Pyrenees, and went through a kind of pass — a mere nothing compared with Alpine passes, and then we descended rapidly by a very good road and felt ourselves really in France.

We were at Perpignan by half-past eight. The hotel was rough, but the beds were comfortable, and — we were out of Spain!

The next day we went on to Lyons, slept there, had a little time for lionising, started again at night, and arrived in Paris yesterday afternoon. So ends my Spanish journey. I found a letter from Marietta awaiting me here. She is, so she tells me, the happiest of the happy; only needing her Dernham friends to leave her nothing to wish for. If she can say this in an *appartement* in the Rambla, what would she say in England? In a little note, enclosed for Ina, she says that Mrs. Randolph is very weak, but much quieter and calmer. That would seem as if Mrs. Randolph was already profiting by the absence of the persons she had

about her. Mr. Neville writes a few words, and signs himself, "yours affectionately and gratefully for life." Yes, I have secured him a treasure, and I fully believe he appreciates it.

Later, 10 P. M. — A most astounding telegram from Barcelona a few hours since. John Penrhyn returned home to find his uncle unconscious from an apoplectic fit. The old man is dead. The will has been opened, and he is disinherited! The landed property goes to Mr. Neville, the personal property is to be divided amongst all but John.

Poor John! I could almost say poor Mr. Neville! He will feel so deeply the young man's disappointment. If John had returned sooner would things have been different?

Well may we pray to be guided and guarded amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life.

CHAPTER XXII.

FOUR YEARS AFTERWARDS.

June 6. — My dear Ina's two-and-twentieth birthday — an important day, as she is now of age. She is spending it at Arling. It was Mrs. Penrhyn's special request, and I could not say nay. I was to have been there with Agnes and Essie yesterday, but just as it was all settled Agnes was taken ill with a feverish cold, and I was afraid to leave her. She is nearly well again, but it was too late to make an alteration in my plans when Mrs. Penrhyn had filled the house. Ina and I have interchanged letters. I had so much to say of love and hope and tender anxiety, that I am afraid I gave her very little news. She gives me a good deal.

"Arling, June 6, 18—.

"My dearest Mamma, — You will be looking out for a letter I know to-morrow, and so shall I. I could not bear the day to pass without your hearing from me, and I am quite sure I shall hear from you. I have not yet recovered my disappointment at your being unable to come to Arling. I am quite certain grandmamma wished it very much, and you would have seen all the wonderful things that are to be done in my honour. As I told you the other day, there is to be a treat for the school-children in the afternoon, and a dinner for

the old men and women, and a procession, and flags and banners, and then a dance in the evening for us; and all the Worthingtons are to be here. It will be delightful. If you could only have been with us, and Agnes and Essie! You might have stayed the fortnight, and then we might all have gone home together in time for Charlie and Hugh's holidays. I forget, though, I suppose Charlie will have to go to a tutor if he means by-and-by to try for a scholarship at Oxford. But dear mamma, do you know, I heard the other day that he has set his heart upon going into the army, and that he says he does not like to tell you because it will vex you, but that he feels that an Oxford education will be quite thrown away upon him; it had much better be kept for Hugh. Frank Neville said this, and so it came round to me — through Miss Charlotte Anson, a niece of our Lady Anson. She is staying at Lord Worthington's. She met Frank at some ball. I am afraid it must be true, because Charlie tells Frank Neville everything. I can't bear to worry you, but I thought it right you should know. I am enchanted at the idea of having Mr. Neville and Marietta for the summer at Woodleigh, and so glad the place is untenanted just now, but I am sorry that Marietta should not be well and require sea-bathing. I long to see the little Cissy; Charlotte Anson, who has seen her, says she is lovely, just like her mother. Grandmamma has a most beautiful sketch of the house at Cannes, where poor Mrs. Randolph died. It hangs in her bedroom close to Aunt Katharine's likeness, and there is a

coloured photograph of Mrs. Randolph by it; very like her, only perhaps a little flattered. Grandmamma means to ask Mr. Neville and Marietta to stay here, before they go back to the north. Lord Worthington, who has a brother living near Chilhurst, praises Mr. Neville up to the skies as a good landlord, and says the property has doubled in value since it has been in his hands. Lord Hopeton, too, thinks Marietta quite fascinating, and you may be sure I chime in with the praises; but I am afraid she must have lost some of her beauty since last year, for Lord Hopeton says when he saw her she was looking so very thin. I do trust Dernham air will set her up. Aunt Bessie sends her love to you, and would very much like to see you. Please tell Agnes that she will find the Sunday School Register in one of the upper drawers of my wardrobe — I don't know which. I advise her to get a new one, and begin afresh. I think I shall leave my class in her hands for a few weeks when I get home, as really, after all I have been doing here, I shall want a little rest. I have bought a charming copy of Macaulay's Lays for Essie's birthday. Give the little pet a great kiss for me. Can it possibly be true that Mr. L'Estrange is going to give up his living? Charlotte Anson says there is such a report, but I suppose it is not true, as you say nothing of it. She told me the other day quite in confidence that she was sure he was desperately in love with Marietta three years ago; for she was at the manor when the news of her marriage came to Dernham, and he shut himself up in his house

for a week, and never even went to see the poor people — except one man who was dying — and when he came out again, he looked quite as if he had had a severe illness. You know we thought him looking very ill when we came back. I wonder how they will meet now, and whether he has quite got over it.

"Dearest mamma, I have written you a gossiping letter, because there were so many things I wanted to say, but the real reason I had for writing was to send you my very truest and best love, and thanks for all you have done for me. It always comes back to me — especially on my birthday, — what I should have been without you. And this two-and-twentieth birthday is such a great and important one, though I am not — what grandmamma will persist in calling me — an heiress. I wish I was a great deal better than I am, but one thing I am sure of, that I should have been much worse without you.

"Ever your most loving child,

"INA.

"P.S. Is it not strange that John Penrhyn should so entirely have changed places with Mr. Neville, and be going to India? They say he is sure to succeed there as a barrister. Grandmamma has quite forgiven him for being brought up a Neville, since he took a double first-class. She says that being disinherited has been the making of him; and he certainly is uncommonly pleasant. He was here only a few days ago. Grandmamma says she would give some help towards John's expenses, but Mr. Neville takes every-

thing upon himself, and has allowed him three hundred a year ever since old Mr. Neville's death. Grandmamma thinks that John ought not to want more. I suppose she is right, at any rate Mr. Neville is bound to help him, as he has the property which John expected to have."

Mrs. Bradshaw appeared just as I had finished reading this letter, and I showed it to her. She came by invitation to dine and keep Ina's birthday. In the afternoon we had a long talk about many things. It was to me by far the most satisfactory way of keeping the birthday, which could not but bring sad thoughts to me, and I was thankful to be spared festivities. Colonel Bradshaw's children, Frances and Anna, were invited to spend the afternoon with Agnes and Essie, and they all went on the shore together. Mrs. Bradshaw and I sat out in the garden, under the pleasant shade of the ash trees, a happy murmur of bees, and twittering of birds around us, and beyond, the grand roll of the sea. It was very delicious, and Ina's letter gave us sufficient subject for conversation. Mrs. Bradshaw wanted to know why I was so glad not to be at Arling.

"Because," I said, "I never, if I can avoid it, place myself in a false position; and at Arling, on the day of Ina's coming of age, I must have been so. You know I am her sole guardian, and this is a fact which Mrs. Penrhyn never forgives or forgets; she always does her very utmost to put me aside and make the world believe that our positions are reversed. No,

it is best as it is. I have arranged with the lawyers all that had to be done, which was very little; and now Mrs. Penrhyn can have everything her own way."

"You are a coward, after all," said Mrs. Bradshaw. "I should have given you credit for being able to make a better fight."

"But what for? What is the use of fighting when there is nothing to be gained?"

"Except power, which we women always so dearly delight in."

"I beg your pardon. It is precisely because I have the power that I don't want to exert it, still less to make a show of it —"

"But, my dear friend, there is more in show than you think for. The world is governed by it. As the Psalmist says in that verse which strikes me more and more every time I come across it, for its wonderful knowledge of human nature and human life, 'So long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee.' If you claim power for yourself it will be yielded; if you give it up, it will be disputed and at last taken from you."

"Be it so," I said. "I really care too little about it to contend for it."

"Very well, then. Remember you will have nothing to complain of when you find your stepdaughter and her worthy grandmother carving out life in their own fashion and totally ignoring you."

"What is there to carve?" I said, looking up in astonishment.

"What is there not to carve? Beauty, grace, amiability, and a pleasant little fortune for pin money on the one hand; and the Worthington estates, and the heir apparent on the other. Viscountess Hopeton, Countess of Worthington! a most exciting prospect for your sweet Ina."

I laid down my work in disgust. "Really," I said, "you are too bad. I don't think well of Mrs. Penrhyn, I confess, but I give her credit for something better than that."

"Better, my dear! what could be better? Besides, you yourself, if my memory does not fail, entertained the suspicion some time ago."

"Yes," I said, "it did come into my mind, but I scolded myself for it."

"You would have been wiser to scold Mrs. Penrhyn, and if such an idea presented itself then much more will it do so now."

"No," I said, "begging your pardon, there is an especial reason why it should not do so. Lord Hopeton has grown up an unutterable dunce, totally unworthy of Ina; and everyone knows that his character at Oxford was very far from satisfactory. He is just the very last person whom Ina ought to marry, putting aside what is in my mind a grave objection, the difference of position."

"A baby! a mere baby in long clothes," said Mrs. Bradshaw patting my hand, "but I won't argue

with you, only just remember one thing, that when the world has by universal consent pronounced a certain dictum, we may be tolerably certain of being in the wrong if we go against it. The world says that for a woman to marry a man above her in rank is not to be objected to, to marry one below her is. You would never make Mrs. Penrhyn or Mrs. Anyone else believe you were in earnest in objecting to Ina's marrying Lord Hopeton, because she is not quite his equal in birth."

"No," I said, "I should never make anyone believe it, I know that quite well. But it is not the less true."

"And you mean that you would actually bring it forward as a difficulty?"

"I would not bring it forward in the case of a real attachment, but I would act upon it so far that I would not put Ina or any other young girl in the way of temptation. In this case, though, I don't believe it would be a temptation. It is impossible that Ina should care for a man like Lord Hopeton."

"Only she may care for his coronet," said Mrs. Bradshaw, in an undertone. "Forgive me for being so persistent. Besides I don't recognise your objection."

"You don't think it objectionable then for a girl to be cut off from her early associations, to be placed in a circle where she is never likely to meet them, and where the old tendernesses and kindnesses are almost necessarily forgotten? Now, I do. Life, under

the best of circumstances, is hardening, but to cherish the affections and sympathies of childhood tends to counteract the evil, it keeps the heart gentle and unselfish."

"Possibly you are right, and I know you always had a Utopia of love in a cottage for your girls."

"My dear friend," I said, "I have really had no Utopia at all. Marriage is just one of those things which I feel must be left in God's Hands, it must be as He wills."

"Precisely what I have not the least doubt Mrs. Penrhyn says when she brings the 'dear Worthingtons' continually upon the *tapis*, throws the young people together, talks of and praises them to each other, and in fact plays Beatrice and Benedick with them, intending all the while when they rush blindfold into each other's arms, to draw back, and lift her saintly eyes to heaven and exclaim, — how Providential! And she will take the world in, my dear, and you too. You will all believe it Providential."

"Shall I?" I said, doubtingly.

"Yes, you will, because you won't believe my word now. You won't face facts as they are. It is the greatest fault I have to find with you. Why won't you look at Mrs. Penrhyn as what she is — a scheming, manœuvring, worldly old woman, with no more truth in her than is required to make her falsehood pass current with her fellow-creatures?"

"I do look at her in that light when I am obliged to do so, but as it is not a very pleasant sight I shut

my eyes to it when I can. She has been civil to me lately, and kind to Ina, and I want to make the best of her."

"And she patronises John Penrhyn because he has taken a first class, and is quite courteous to Mr. Neville and Marietta because they have five thousand a year. Success, my dear, success, that is the secret of it all!"

"There is no success in my case," I said; "I am neither more nor less than I was when she first knew me."

"Oh! but Mrs. Penrhyn never wastes her neglect. She will always be civil when she has no motive for being the reverse, and you know you have kept out of her way of late."

"Yes, I have only been there once during the last three years, and that only for two days."

"Exactly, and she thinks she has conquered, and can have everything her own way; and she will have it. It is an unpleasant prophecy, but she will, unless you exert yourself to oppose her."

"I wish you would tell me how," I said.

"Well, don't be shocked. But if you wish Ina not to marry Lord Hopeton, you should put her in the way of marrying some one else."

"No," I said, "that I will never do."

"Hush! quiet! you start like a horse touched by the whip. I don't mean that you should choose any particular individual, and then throw your child in his way, in the hope of attracting him; that would be

simply fighting Mrs. Penrhyn with her own weapons — and very miserable and unworthy ones they are; but I do mean that you should send her about into the world a little more, and give her the opportunity of seeing more people. For the last three years you have kept her here, with only the change of a visit to Arling, and, of course, if she thinks about anyone, it must be some person connected with these two places; she can have no interest beyond."

"That is true," I said; "but I have been so anxious about her. And you know Ina; — you know what there is in her which, with all my efforts, I have never been able quite to root out."

"Yes. She is not transparent, she dearly loves a little mystery; one sees it written in her face — sweet face though it is; but you won't do any good (forgive me for lecturing you) by keeping her tied to your apron-string. I am convinced that a girl of her character will profit by nothing but her own experience, and the best thing you can do is to give it her in some safe form; whether Arling is safe of course you know best."

Just for the moment I felt a little irritated, and I daresay my face showed it.

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Bradshaw, "I have done wrong. I knew I should. I am the worst person in the world to try a winding lane in order to reach to my point. It is against my nature, which teaches me to ride a steeple-chase, and get to it quickly. Now, listen." She drew out a letter. "This, you see, is

from Charlotte Anson, of whom Ina speaks — a good-natured gossiping woman of five-and-thirty, and it is written to my little daughter-in-law, Marian. They have lately struck up a friendship, in the hope, I suspect, that two heads with half an ounce of brains each, may be found as useful in life as one head with a whole ounce." Mrs. Bradshaw scanned the closely written, illegible, and partly crossed epistle. "Dated, you see, from Worthington Hall. Now then."

"We all go to Arling to-morrow, to keep Ina Anstruther's birthday. Mrs. Penrhyn gives out that she is an heiress, and so there are to be great festivities, and I daresay we shall all enjoy ourselves very much. But if I were Lady Worthington I should be disgusted at the way Mrs. Penrhyn goes on, really throwing Ina at Lord Hopeton, and making such a fuss about the family — evidently with a purpose. It is marvellous to me that they don't appear to see it; everyone else does. It would be a very unsuitable marriage in point of connection, and I should have thought the Worthingtons would have been the last persons to entertain the idea; but a friend of theirs, who knows a good deal of the ins and outs of their affairs, says that the real fact is, that Lord Hopeton is such a scamp, that if his mother can only get him married to any respectable and well-bred girl she will not care who it is, for she thinks it will be the means of keeping him out of mischief. And so Ina Anstruther is to be sacrificed. Poor girl! I should pity her; only she seems to take to the flirtation very kindly."

Mrs. Bradshaw laid down the letter, and waited for my comment.

"Well!" she said, at last, seeing that I was not inclined to speak.

"Not well at all," was my reply. "Of course Ina must come home at once. My dear friend, forgive me for being cross, but I have blundered, and in a grave matter. That is enough to make one cross, at least with oneself."

"The gossip may, or may not, be true," said Mrs. Bradshaw; "but I felt it was right you should know it."

"Yes, unquestionably, and I blame myself greatly, I could not have helped the present state of affairs — I mean, I could not have gone to Arling now; but I know I have yielded to my distaste in times past, and seized upon excuses to stay at home, and Ina has been left too much to her grandmother's influence."

"Never too late to mend," said Mrs. Bradshaw, kindly. "The festivities will only last one day, and matters will scarcely proceed at so very quick a rate. Mr. Neville and Marietta come to Woodleigh next week. That will be an excuse for having Ina home; and she has plenty of sense; and when she has been a few weeks in the society of a man like Mr. Neville, she will be less willing to tolerate Lord Hopeton."

"Except that she can marry the one, and she can't marry the other," I said.

"That does make a difference; but still there is a great deal in seeing what a man can be, as well as

what he ought to be. A hearty respect for a first-rate man raises the tone of a woman's mind, just as much as respect for a woman raises a man's."

"It is what Ina wants," I said. "She sees so few men."

"Precisely. Henry Anson is really the only young man in the place — not reckoning the Westford strangers."

"And at one time," I said, "I had a misgiving as to him. It was just after we came from abroad, and when he had been so bitterly disappointed about Marietta. There was a kind of mutual understanding between Ina and him then which I did not quite like."

Mrs. Bradshaw laughed. "But, my dear, why not? One would think that you meant to keep Ina from all profane eyes and turn her into a Sister of Mercy. She might go farther and fare worse."

"Still I should not like it. Henry Anson is a good young man in his way, but he is not superior; and I don't fancy my child's coming in in that way to make up for a disappointment. At any rate, I am glad there is nothing in it."

"On her side," added Mrs. Bradshaw; "on his I should not be so sure."

"Poor silly young man!" I said, "he has always a little love affair of some kind on his hands."

"Very naturally. Sir John grows old. Lady Anson preaches to him that it is his duty to marry, and Mrs. Harcourt still presents the fair Lydia to his un-

willing acceptance. What can he do in the midst of such persecution, except nourish a little private romance for his own special entertainment?"

"I plead guilty to a very naughty feeling," I said. "I should delight in Ina's refusing young Anson. Lady Anson has behaved so badly to me."

"Looking at it in that Christian point of view, there would be greater delight in her accepting him," said Mrs. Bradshaw. "It would spite Lady Anson more."

"Ah! but my pride comes in there. I could not have my child thrust into a family unwillingly."

"Very natural. Yet I really hope that if ever the opportunity presented itself, you would not allow either pride or spite to stand in the way."

"I hope not, if Ina's happiness were concerned; but that is all wild talking. They have gone on safely hitherto. If they had meant to fall in love they would have done so long ago."

"You forget that Henry Anson was not heart-whole for the first year after you returned from Spain," said Mrs. Bradshaw. "I don't believe, indeed, that he really got over his feeling for Marietta till last autumn, when, if you remember, he was staying somewhere in the north, and went to Chilhurst for a few days. Then I think he began actually to realise that it was all over."

"He may have suffered," I said; "but my sympathy in all that matter went to the Rector."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Bradshaw, "an attack of love,

like whooping-cough and measles, should be had early, if people mean to recover from it. At the Rector's age it may be fatal. I shall take care to be out of the way when I know the first meeting is to take place. I don't like to see a poor innocent dumb creature suffer."

"Sadly irreverent, still," I said, laughing.

"Not at all — only truth-speaking. He is innocent — you can't deny that; and it would be much more irreverent — in fact, it would be scandalous — to call him anything else. And dumb — yes, you and I both know that he is quite dumb where his feelings are concerned. If he had not been, he would have spoken his mind to Marietta long before you went abroad; and ten to one she would have listened to him."

"Never!" I exclaimed.

"Indignant or virtuous, which?" inquired Mrs. Bradshaw, ironically. "Yet I again say, ten to one she would have listened to him. If possession is nine points of the law, declaration is nine points of love — I mean, of course, with women. If ever it should be my fate to give counsel to a man who has the disease, I should certainly say, 'Speak — never mind being refused — speak.' A woman is a monster who is not softened by the knowledge that a man cares for her, and even if she should say 'No,' at first, there will almost always be an opportunity for a second attempt."

"Henry Anson spoke to Marietta, and met a refusal, once and for ever," I said.

"Yes, because at the very moment her heart was given to some one else. One can't in these matters provide against all accidents."

"And Marietta," I continued, "liked Mr. Neville from the very beginning of their acquaintance — so, at least, I suspect; therefore I don't see when and how the Rector could ever have had a chance."

"What! not before Mr. Neville came, when he was paying all those devoted attentions at the time of the Woodleigh troubles, making himself Marietta's sole guardian and protector, and even buying up her diamond locket to help her, or rather to help Mrs. Randolph, in a difficulty!"

"How do you know that?" I said. "I fancied it was so, but I never knew it for certain."

"Because you are not like me, you never ask questions. I did ask, not from mere curiosity, I hope, but from a wish to save Marietta unnecessary sacrifices, and Cairn, the jeweller, told me. He, himself, took the locket ostensibly, but it was with the understanding that the Rector was to have it afterwards."

"And the Rector gave the locket back to her then?" I said.

"Not he, poor man! He never dared. I suspect he waited till he could offer it with his love. Anyhow, that, and a hundred other delicate little kindnesses have been all wasted upon her. She has never understood them."

"Ah! well!" I said, with a sigh. "It is a very perplexing and heartaching world, and that is the best one can say for it. There is no joy but is purchased by a sorrow."

"Query whether without sorrow we could know joy?" said Mrs. Bradshaw; "but I don't want to go off into metaphysics. Here comes one who looks as if the very element of her existence was joy. You had better marry her to the Rector. I believe she would turn his grey hair into black again."

At that moment Essie came rushing up to us, a basket on her arm, full of treasures gathered on the shore — sea-weeds and sea-anemones, a star-fish and a sea-urchin, with various other wonders having very unpronounceable names, but which she has lately taken it into her head to become acquainted with. Her very bright blue eyes sparkled with delight; and certainly, with her mass of rich auburn hair, turned off her face and caught in a net behind, her clear forehead and straight nose, her transparent complexion and brilliant colour, she did look very attractive; and I doubt if anyone would have been inclined to complain even of her rather large mouth showing a row of beautiful pearly teeth. The exuberant buoyancy of her spirits, the merry tones of her voice, and the laugh, which always sounds to me like the echo of a festival bell, form always a marked contrast to Agnes. I could not help saying to Mrs. Bradshaw as they came up, "You would scarcely take the two for sisters." "No," was the reply, "except for a certain family likeness. Agnes,

you know, is my ideal of a nun, and I think it is a great pity you don't make her one at once. That very delicate pale face, the chiselled features, as artists and poets call them, and the soft eyes, which look as if they were made of crystallised tears, would do so well set off by a nun's coif. And you may be sure the child can never be happy in this wicked world. She was not made for it."

"So you and I say," I answered; "but then possibly we may know nothing about it. And one fact is against us — she has evidently been sent into it."

Mrs. Bradshaw was going to reply, but the children — I must call them children still, though Agnes is seventeen — came near and interrupted us.

Essie was pressing forward to exhibit her wonders first, but Agnes gently touched her shoulder, and Frances and Anna Bradshaw were put forward instead.

"Yes, yes, all right!" was Essie's exclamation; and she laid aside her own basket, and took out the strange creatures collected by her little friends, and which they seemed half unwilling to approach.

"Agnes says they are uncanny, mamma, and Anna says they are crawley; but ar'n't they beauties? Just see this crimson one, and the darling little purple, and this huge monster — the largest of all — and such lovely little crabs! Frances will have as good a collection as mine now, and I am to go and teach her how to keep them fresh."

"We must hope Mrs. Bradshaw will take a fancy to the creatures, too, Essie," I said.

"Oh yes, but I know she will, she is so kind — dear Mrs. Bradshaw!" and the rather brown hands which had been busy with sand and sea-weed, were upon the point of being laid entreatingly upon Mrs. Bradshaw's collar, when Agnes again interposed —

"Stop, Essie, such dirty hands!"

"To be sure. I forgot. I shall go and wash them. We will all go and wash our hands; and we will put the creatures into the large glass vase, and bring them into the drawing-room. Mamma, darling, you don't mind, I know you don't; it shall be on the side-table. We won't make any mess. Ar'n't they beauties?" And Essie ran off, followed by Fanny and Anna.

Agnes sat down on the grass. "Mamma, may I stay just a few minutes with you?"

"Tired, little woman?" said Mrs. Bradshaw.

"Only a little — not very," replied Agnes. "Essie would make us hunt for the sea-anemones, and that took us a long time and a long way, and it was so hot!"

"You should have sat on the shore," I said, "and sent them to search. You know, you can't do as much as Essie."

"But I thought she would take Fanny and Anna too far, and Mrs. Bradshaw said she trusted them to me."

"My dear little conscientious idiot!" said Mrs. Bradshaw, "please to remember that duty is a good horse, but it is cruel to ride it to death."

"Only Agnes never thinks it possible to ride duty to death," I said; "do you, darling?"

"No, mamma; because if one did, it wouldn't be duty, but something else."

"Precisely, child," said Mrs. Bradshaw; "that is what you have to learn; and who is to teach you, I don't know."

"Experience," I said.

"Not you, mamma?" asked Agnes, looking up wistfully.

"No, dear child, it is one of those things which can't be taught, it can only be learnt; because, you see, teaching involves the giving of rules, and they involve the necessity of knowing beforehand all the circumstances under which they are to be applied, and that is an impossibility. I am afraid, Agnes, you must learn to be your own guide."

"A sorrowful prospect, little nun," said Mrs. Bradshaw.

"No," said Agnes, quietly, "not sorrowful; but it makes one think."

"And thinking makes your cheek pale and your face thin. Sea-urchins are better than thinking, take my word for it, Agnes."

"Yes, if one could like them as well," said Agnes, laughing; "but they are uncanny — everyone must own that — and so slimy! And the great anemones swallow the little crabs."

"And that is hard-hearted," said Mrs. Bradshaw, "though we do eat legs of mutton every day, and

think ourselves very badly off when we can't get them. Ah! well, Agnes, it is what I said three years ago, you must have a little world for yourself."

"In which there shall be no sea-anemones," I said.

"Oh, mamma! no, no!" exclaimed Agnes. "Of course I know it is all right, and very wonderful and beautiful, and I do admire them, and I always help Essie to search for them; but I like to sit on the shore and watch the waves better. One can't help one's tastes." She started up. "And now I must go into Woodleigh and see if the gardener has put the flower-beds in order for Mr. Neville. Marietta wrote especially to beg that might be done."

"And now you shall go in and rest," I said, "and Mrs. Bradshaw and I will go into Woodleigh. We have been sitting here lazily all the afternoon, and there will be just time for you to rest, and for us to walk, before tea."

"Dear mamma! always thinking of me," said Agnes, "and always tiring yourself!"

But when I repeated that I had had no walking, she assented, and Mrs. Bradshaw and I strolled into the kitchen garden, and went through the once locked gate into the Woodleigh grounds.

Many tenants have occupied Woodleigh since the time that Mrs. Randolph left it, and it was sold. Some have been pleasant, some the reverse; but there have been none with whom we have made any very intimate acquaintance. The place is a good deal changed, and in a way which I fear Marietta will feel. It has

not the trim look which a house and grounds under daily supervision naturally acquire.

And Marietta has never seen it since her marriage. She and Mr. Neville were abroad with Mrs. Randolph for a year after their marriage; that is to say, Mr. Neville came occasionally to England, but their head-quarters were at Cannes, where Mrs. Randolph died. When, after that, they came to settle in England, they were obliged to go at once to the north, and little Cissy was born; it was winter, and Marietta was not strong: and in this way obstacles to our meeting have perpetually interposed, and it has been heart-sickening and disappointing; for I have had a great craving to see her, and so has Ina; I should say, also, so has Marietta longed to see us, if I did not feel that she must have had such very engrossing interests apart from us. Her letters are just the same, but they are fewer than they were. At first she wrote every week, now I hear about once in two months; but that is natural. I cannot help thinking she must be changed, yet she seems to retain all her feeling for us and for Dernham and Woodleigh generally. She has quite set her heart upon coming to Woodleigh; and I want her to feel that the place has been cared for, though she has no longer any direct interest in it.

Mrs. Bradshaw and I strolled about the garden, and wandered through the rooms, moralising, and yet keeping upon the surface. One never ventures to go deep when touching upon things connected with the dead.

Praise seems presumptuous, and censure hard; but I could not help recalling — as I do almost involuntarily whenever I go to Woodleigh — the curious train of slight circumstances which have combined to weave the web of Marietta's lot so closely with my own. And thinking of her and of Mr. Neville brought back to me Ina's mention of Frank Neville and his report of Charlie, which somehow had not made much impression upon me till I read the letter a second time. I discussed it with Mrs. Bradshaw, and she promised to talk of it to the Colonel. I should be very much afraid of the army for Charlie as a profession, but still it is useless to fight against decided tastes, and it would be folly to throw away money upon a University education if, after all, it is to come to nothing. The great point to be decided will be whether it is a wish for one profession, or a longing to escape from another. Yet it can scarcely be the latter, for he knows I should not urge his taking orders unless he had a decided bias in that direction. He might be a barrister, if he chose.

We had a merry tea, and some games with the children afterwards, and then Agnes and Essie sang duets to us till they must have been tired, though we were not; and we ended with one or two hymns — the "Evening Hymn," and that beautiful "Abide with me," which always carries me back to Pau, and the death-chamber — with my darling, looking, longing, for the glimmering light which was to be to her the morning dawn of Paradise. How present it all is to

me again! Yes, indeed, as Hood says, "She had another morn than ours."

I came to my room soothed after that. I had not been soothed during the day; I had been too earthly. One does so hate oneself for talking of love and marriage and being settled in life, and all that kind of thing, just as if one thought it the sole object of existence, and as if it had no connection with anything beyond this world. And it is untrue and unreal to do so. When I say that Mr. Anson is not superior, I mean really that he is not religious, that he is quite contented with the present life, that he thinks, so far as I can judge, but little of another, and that his chief aim seems to be that of making himself easy and comfortable. Why does one shrink from saying this? Why should one wrap one's thoughts in cotton, so that no person can tell what they are like? I always detest myself for it, and yet I know I do it very often, even with the friends I love best, and who I am sure would understand me.

CHAPTER XXIII.

June 8. — A letter from Marietta. They hope to be here on Tuesday — five days hence, and three days earlier than we expected. That gives me an excuse for writing at once to Ina, and begging her on no account to delay her return. I do not think, when she is once safe under my wing, I shall be inclined to let her leave me again. Yet there may be some reason in what Mrs. Bradshaw says — that I am inclined to keep her within too narrow bounds, and that I ought to trust her more. Really and truly I do trust her, up to a certain point; but still — it may be the effect of former impressions, it may be that there are some lingering remains of the old fault — I never can feel perfectly safe and happy about her, because I never feel perfectly sure, when she asks my advice, that there is not some little incident, or thought, or feeling kept in the background, which, if I knew it, would give a different turn to my judgment. And every now and then, Essie, who is bluntly true, bursts out with an exclamation of surprise at something Ina has said, or done, or taken for granted, which shows me that she, like myself, sees, or rather feels, that there is cause for misgiving. I don't think Agnes perceives it. She lives so much in the clouds, I doubt whether she

is quick in reading character; and she idealises those she loves, which Essie never does.

And yet Ina is religious. I don't doubt that; but she is self-deceived. It is a great puzzle. How, if we are religious — really bent upon serving God — can we, any of us, be blind to our faults? How can one person indulge vanity, and another pride, and another a bad temper or indolence, without actually being aware of it? I confess I do not know. It is just as great a mystery to me as any of the marvels of science; but it frightens one about oneself. I quarrel with Agnes sometimes for her perpetual introspection, and no doubt it is morbid, and often tends to obscure instead of discovering faults. But really when one sees what people may be, and are, who apparently have no self-knowledge, it makes one feel that too strict self-examination must be a fault on the right side; I mean, of course, when it is carried on by a comparison with the one highest standard of all goodness; otherwise, no doubt, it is useless. To enquire whether we are acting up to what we think right is of secondary importance; the primary question is whether what we think right really is right. In the confusion of these two queries lies, I suspect, the root of all self-deceit.

June 11. — A day of visitors — most fatiguing — and I had a good deal to worry me besides. Charlie writes about this new notion of going into the army, and I cannot at all see my way to it. I must put the matter aside till I can talk to Mr. Neville. Mrs. Penrhyn writes to protest against Ina's coming home. Ina

does not write at all, which vexes me. Mrs. Penrhyn says: —

"Arling, June 10, 18—.

"My dear Mrs. Anstruther, — You will not, I hope, be disappointed at finding that I have a little difficulty in acceding to your request for dear Ina's immediate return. She has been with me such a very short time that I am most unwilling to part with her, especially as, judging from past experience, it is not likely that she will soon be spared to me again. At my age, also, it is presumptuous to look forward; I can but enjoy the present moment with thankfulness, leaving the future in the hands of the All-Wise Orderer of all earthly events. And, therefore, when I have the happiness (so rarely granted) of having my dearest Cecilia's only surviving child with me, I am naturally unwilling to relinquish it, except from some important claim of duty. In the present instance, I confess I do not see that this claim exists. Mrs. Edward Neville is, no doubt, anxious to renew her friendship with my sweet Ina, and as there are now no objections to the intimacy, I should not interpose any obstacle to Ina's return on that account; I merely state my own wishes, and, I may add, those of my daughter, and, I believe, of Ina herself. There are some little festivities in the neighbourhood, to which she has been invited, and which she would be unwilling to lose. To-morrow is to be spent at Worthington Hall, and, as the engagement is of long standing, it would be impossible to

break it without rudeness, especially as the entertainment is to be chiefly in Ina's honour, and is, in fact, another celebration of her birthday. The two following days are also marked by social festivities, and Ina will then require rest. You see, therefore, that it would be out of the question for her to travel for another week, or, at any rate, before next Thursday. I can only hope that Mrs. Edward Neville may be persuaded to remain a little longer in your neighbourhood, and that my dear Ina may have a full opportunity of enjoying their society.

"Believe me, dear Mrs. Anstruther, with our united kind regards to yourself and your family circle,

"Very truly yours,

"MARIA PENRHYN."

Really Mrs. Penrhyn is a most irritating woman. She will not interpose obstacles to the renewal of Ina's friendship with Marietta! — of course she will not, because she cannot. But she delights in exhibitions of would-be authority. And then her assertion that it would be out of the question for Ina to travel for another week! It is a difficulty interposed without any object but that of saying no; for I never expected that Ina could come before Thursday; I never thought of bringing her back at a moment's notice, and that was why I wrote at once, so that she might be ready in time. But there is no use in dwelling upon these worries: the fact is, we neither of us hold the position we did. Ina is now legally her own mistress, and the

important question for the future will be, not which of us she is to obey, but which she is to listen to. That engagement at Worthington Hall is suspicious. Time was when Mrs. Penrhyn's grandchildren might have lived and died, and Lady Worthington would scarcely have acknowledged their existence; now, with an object, it is very different. Yet I can understand and appreciate Lady Worthington if she is anxious to secure a quiet, well-principled wife for her scapegrace son. But Mrs. Penrhyn! I must not let myself think of her! she makes me uncharitable. And Ina will, I trust, be at home on Thursday.

My visitors were here all at the same time, which was tiresome. Lady Anson and her second daughter, Edith, came first. Lady Anson has not called for three months, and made some rather awkward apologies, which I took in perfectly good part. One can't be much offended with persons one does not care about. The Fowlers from Easthope were announced directly afterwards, and old Captain Shaw. The latter I really did wish to see and talk to; but the confusion was trying to his deafness, and I was obliged to leave him. Agnes came in and did her very utmost to help me, but hers is such an extremely shy age! She and Edith Anson sat and looked at each other at first like two frightened hares ready to start at a moment's notice. Edith made no effort to say anything to anyone, but Agnes really did, and when she could extract nothing from Edith she turned to Miss Fowler, and I heard her say, quite in an audible voice, "What an extremely

high tide there was yesterday!" When the Fowlers went she crept round to Captain Shaw, and the old man petted her, as he always does, and promised to give her his photograph, and then she was happy and at her ease; but I could not help being amused at the evident working of her conscience after a time. I believe it never gives her a moment's rest. She was so uncomfortable because Edith Anson was silent; and there were such very decided efforts made to draw her into the conversation, but they failed; Edith Anson can only talk when with her own little clique, the Harcourts and their friends. Lady Anson thought to please me by saying in an undertone that Agnes had grown very pretty; but I am afraid I don't like personal remarks (and remarks upon one's children are personal) from people who don't know how to behave civilly. I was much more conciliated when she spoke of Miss Humphreys, the little dressmaker, and said how ill she looked, and asked if I knew anything about her. That was a matter in which we could have a common interest; for Lady Anson really is extremely benevolent, and would forgive even me my delinquencies if I would but have a dangerous illness. She asked after Ina, and said she had heard of her from her niece, who was staying at Worthington, and she believed it was arranged for Miss Anson to travel with Ina, as they were both coming to Dernham next week. She spoke as if I must know all about it, and I was obliged to confess that I knew nothing; at which Lady Anson looked surprised, and remarked that she

supposed Mrs. Penrhyn took those little arrangements into her own hands. Something also was added about Henry Anson, but what it was I could not quite make out, for just then Captain Shaw asked me some question which diverted my attention; but I am nearly sure Lady Anson said either that her son had been at Worthington, or was going there. I should not have thought of it afterwards, but that, when Lady Anson was gone and Agnes was out of the room, the old Captain said to me in his quaint, faltering, earnest way —

"My dear madam, there is trouble, I fear, lowering over our good friends at the manor. Sir John looks very much shaken."

"Ill, do you mean?" I said.

"Yes, weakened, I know not from what cause, but it must be evident to his family, though they do not speak of it. I could wish that our young friend Henry were married. It would be a satisfaction to his parents when looking forward to a change."

"Perhaps," I said, hastily, as the idea flashed across my mind that Lord Hopeton had a sister — "perhaps, he is gone away to look for a wife now, but I am sorry to hear you speak in that way of Sir John. I had noticed that he had not been at church for the last three or four Sundays, but I did not know that there was anything serious the matter, or I should certainly have asked Lady Anson about it."

"You have done well not to ask," was the reply. "I inquired yesterday after I had seen Sir John, but Lady Anson did not like it. I should not have known

there was so much amiss, but that I had occasion to see Sir John on some magistrate's business, and, though I was admitted to the library, and had a satisfactory interview, I could not but be struck with his looks. And he was very feeble — strangely feeble. He is ten years younger than I am. Ah! dear madam, it makes me say, Why do I still cumber the ground?"

He stood up to go; Agnes came in from the garden just then, bringing a specimen of a new kind of creeper which I gave her in the spring, and which has been blossoming in front of the cottage. She and Captain Shaw are great horticultural allies. He took the flower from her and examined it, and gave it a long botanical name; but his thoughts were absent, and, as she looked at him with an air of slight disappointment, he said —

"Yes, little maiden, it is very beautiful, but I trust to see others more so before long. Yet the angels who tend them will scarce be fairer or dearer than the angels of earth. God bless them!" And he laid his hand upon Agnes' head.

Her sweet little face was upraised to his, and he bent down and kissed her. As they stood together, they were an exquisite picture of holy age and youth.

The old man went away almost directly, and Agnes and I came back to what we are accustomed to call the atmosphere of everyday life — to the mists, in fact, which shroud reality.

CHAPTER XXIV.

June 14. — They are here at Woodleigh. They came last evening. I went to Woodleigh to receive them. Marietta is looking precisely as she did when we parted at Barcelona, not a day older. She is just as impulsive — just as sunshiny, and loving, and enthusiastic. Marriage does not seem to have sobered her in the least — I suppose because she did not want sobering; only there is a pretty matronly dignity and pride when she talks of her child. She was vexed that Ina was not here, but quite understood that their change of plans had been the cause. And Mr. Neville — he really is very much altered, he is grown so much younger — I could almost say so much less cynical, but that I do not think he ever was a cynic at heart. At any rate, he has come down to the level of ordinary mortals; though I see a few traces of the old tendency to dogmatise and keep the world in order, when he scolds his wife for having so much to say that she does not let him put in a word. I stayed with them really shamefully late last night, considering they had had quite a long journey, but we had so much to talk about. Marietta bears old reminiscences better than I expected she would. She has a happier feeling connected with her aunt from having been with her that

year abroad, when Mrs. Randolph really, I believe, became very much more what Marietta longed to see her. Woodleigh now reminds her chiefly of her first acquaintance with us. Victor, Mr. Neville tells me, is growing a fine boy, and is kept in excellent order by his great uncle. He was allowed to be abroad with his mother for two or three months latterly, and was with her when she died. As for Lady Chase and the Baron, no one seems to know anything about them, except that Mr. Neville says he thinks he saw the Baron once in Paris, looking very poor and disreputable.

I asked about John Penrhyn, and Marietta was willing enough to talk about him; but with Mr. Neville I found it was rather a sore subject; he never can quite get over the sense of having unintentionally done the young man an injury. This I understood when talking to Marietta alone; and I confess to having rather an uncomfortable feeling myself when I find upon what he grounds this idea. I never knew till now that old Mr. Neville's fit was said to have been brought on by worry of mind about John, of whom he was excessively fond. John's refusal to go home when he was recalled from Madrid, added to the reports which were spread, worked upon the old man's mind, and caused him to alter his will; and distress at being, as he thought, called upon to do this brought on his illness. But, as Marietta explained to me, things might possibly have been different if John could have reached England in time to see his uncle and tell him exactly

how matters were. The delay of the few days when we were at Valencia, and he was wasting his time at Barcelona, prevented this. Mr. Neville blames himself for it; though, as Marietta says, she has shown him again and again that he acted for the best. He thinks that perhaps the longing to be with her influenced and blinded him to what was a duty. As to that, however, if anyone is to blame I am, for if I had spoken out at once, and told Mr. Neville at our first meeting where John was, and what had passed between him and the Baron, I believe he would have started for Barcelona instantly, and sent John home. I do not feel, however, that I am called upon to repent of what I did, simply on account of a result wholly unforeseen.

Perhaps, though, if I had profited by the train of events as Mr. Neville has, I might have more misgivings as to the right and wrong of my conduct. Marietta tells me that at first Mr. Neville wished to make some great sacrifice for John — to give up to him, in fact, a large portion of the property; but John would not hear of it. He accepted three hundred a year, that he might finish his career at Oxford, and then he set himself to study immensely hard, and has done wonders. Even Mr. Neville owns that the disinheritance has, in its effects, been the best thing which has ever happened to him.

I spoke of Mrs. Penrhyn and her forgiveness of all past offences in consideration of John's having taken a double first-class, which amused Marietta extremely;

and I gave Ina's report of him as being uncommonly pleasant.

"Yes, he is fascinating, quite fascinating now," said Marietta; "just as clever, and amusing, and simple as ever, and so good — really good; Edward quite approves of him."

"And what do you do, my dear?" I asked. "I should like your own opinion; or do you only see with your husband's eyes?"

"I try to have eyes of my own," said Marietta, laughing; "but you know it is difficult when one lives with ——" she paused.

I finished the sentence.

"Anyone so very perfect as Mr. Neville."

"Well! yes, it may be very foolish, but I do think him almost perfect, and I have had nearly four years' experience. As to John, you will be able to judge for yourself, for we have asked him to come and stay with us whilst we are here."

These few words, which passed just before I left Woodleigh, have suggested a new subject for thought, and not entirely a pleasant one. John Penrhyn may be an angel, but I don't want to have him here with Ina. He is Henry Penrhyn's son, and I can never forget the warning given and the promise made.

June 15. — A most enjoyable day. I had Marietta all to myself in the morning, or at least after I had finished lessons with Essie, and she and Mr. Neville dined with us early (he is really a very obedient husband, and succumbed without a protest .to the early

dinner); and then, when it became cool, we all went down to the shore. To-morrow I suppose the Westford and Dernham world will think it right to call on Mrs. Edward Neville, though they looked a little askance on Marietta Randolph.

Mrs. Bradshaw told me beforehand that she should not come the first day, and the only person there seemed a chance of seeing was the Rector, but he did not appear. Agnes is perfectly charmed with Marietta. She was such a child in former days that she was unable to recognise all there is to admire and love in her; but now I see the dawning of that girlish romance for a woman older and wiser (especially where there is anything like beauty) which is so common at Agnes' age, and which really is, I think, upon the whole, a very good thing. Esther's delight is the little Cissy, who can just walk alone, and say a few words. Last night she was so sleepy that I could only look at her in her nurse's arms; and afterwards, when she was lying in her cot, her soft round arm and her little hand half hiding her flushed cheek, and when she certainly looked bewitching. To-day I am not sure that I think her quite so pretty; she has her father's high forehead, which is rather too high for such a mite, but the eyes and mouth are Marietta's; and the way she puts up her face to be kissed has just that air of Italian impulse and unreserve which adds to Marietta's attractions.

Esther carried her off to a distance, and, with the help of the nurse, built up a castle on the sand for

her, whilst we were so engaged in conversation that we did not notice what went on; at least, I did not, until, turning round, I saw the little thing toddling away by herself to meet a great wave which was just coming in. I screamed out, though I don't think there was anything really to be alarmed at, as the nurse went after her directly; but before she could reach her, a gentleman came round the point, and, catching the child up in his arms, brought her up to Esther. I saw then that it was Mr. L'Estrange. He said a few words to Esther, and looked towards us; but I am nearly sure he was half inclined to turn back. Marietta, however, recognised him, and with an exclamation of, "Oh, there is the dear old Rector!" ran forward to meet him. Mr. Neville and I followed more leisurely. The Rector's manner was stony. One might have thought that he was speaking to a person, not only indifferent to him, but absolutely disagreeable, and poor Marietta was chilled to the heart. She glanced, first at him, then at me, and tears gathered in her eyes.

"You have nearly forgotten me, I am afraid, Mr. L'Estrange," she said, attempting to laugh.

"Oh no! on no account; how could it be?"

He did not know in the least what to say, and I tried to help him, and made matters worse; for I observed to Marietta, "that I could answer for it that Mr. L'Estrange had never forgotten her."

I had no particular meaning in my words. I uttered them by that kind of fatality which seems to

make one every now and then say precisely what one ought not to say.

The poor Rector coloured like a culprit, stammered out something about congratulations, and offered to shake hands with Mr. Neville, who, having his attention engaged at the instant, did not respond. The Rector then drew back his unshaken hand, looked round at the sea as though he would fain have thrown himself into it, and wished us good evening.

"He is ill or unhappy," said Marietta to me, as we walked on along the sand.

"Both, perhaps," said Mr. Neville; and, as our eyes met, I saw that he understood the truth, though Marietta did not.

Marietta could not recover herself. She referred to the subject again and again. One of her pleasantest anticipations, in coming back to Dernham, had been, she said, the thought of seeing the Rector. He had been such a real, true, kind friend to her; and in some ways he knew more about her than anyone else.

"Perhaps he knows too much," said Mr. Neville, laughing, "and so wishes to withdraw from the acquaintance."

"I suspect he is awkward in recognising your new position," I said. "He is not accustomed to think of you as a wife and mother."

"Yes, it may be; but still —" Marietta stopped, for we had just then turned the point, and came again suddenly upon Mr. L'Estrange.

He was seated on a rock, his back towards us, and

on his knee sat Cissy, playing with his watch-chain, Esther and the nurse standing by. His head was bent down over her. She was attracted by his whiskers, and leaving the watch-chain, pulled at them vigorously. The nurse tried to interpose, but the Rector motioned her away, and then, drawing the little thing closely to him, he kissed her, not once or twice, but again and again, with the impulse of an eager, passionate love, and at length, laying her down half-frightened upon the sand, strode up a pathway which led to the top of the cliff, and was speedily out of sight.

We watched him for a few seconds, after which we turned round and walked home silently.

I think even Marietta then had her eyes opened. She did not mention the Rector's name again during the whole evening.

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